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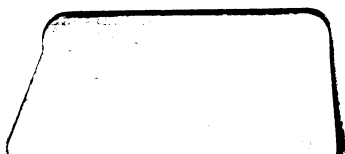


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AMERICANS

—  
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17



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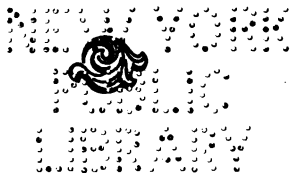
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# AMERICANS

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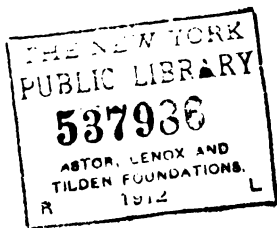
AUTHOR OF "THE IRON MUSE."



NEW YORK

1912

aa



**COPYRIGHT, 1912**  
**By JOHN CURTIS UNDERWOOD**

ROY WOOD  
JOHN  
WAGG

This page is at once foreword and dedication. In *The Iron Muse* I tried to make a book, popular and literary; of the people, for the people and by the people from cover to cover; which has been pronounced a fairly comprehensive criticism of American life up to date.

The effort here is to repeat and exemplify; through the medium of one hundred representative "Americans" of to-day, who address themselves directly to the reader in speaking parts of thirty lines or less. The result may seem to many chaotic. As such, literature *per se* disregarded for the moment; the author claims that it is truly representative and interpretive of America in the making to-day.

The subject being America, treatment in the majority of cases is necessarily realistic. *The Poet, The Interner, The Reporter, Broilers, Central, The Felon* and *The First Born* are frankly idealized.

To many critics and precisians the last of these poems will doubtless seem the best in the book. Such men and women still dictate the literary policy of our leading magazines and reviews. Meantime the demand for serious modern verse in America to-day approximates an irreducible minimum.

To those who like the author are insurgents in art and other things, who believe in art as a criticism and interpretation of life in the most modern and efficient sense; the strongest poems in the book will speak for themselves and stand by themselves; the value of impressionistic experiments like *The Strap Hanger, The Old Grad, The Sculptor, The Fan, Moving Pictures, Coney Island, The Power Smith* and *The Last Word*; compared with more academic verses will remain sufficiently distinct; at the same time inherently American.

For this audience, who to-day are concerned no less with facts than with form, this book was written. To them it is entrusted.

New York, 11, 12, '11.

manuscript  
July 2, 1912. p. 90

WROY WYM  
DLEEN  
VWABU

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## THE LIBRARIAN

---

That freedom falls to rise. Deluded, shamed,  
Bought and betrayed she seeks her leaders out  
To light the centuries. Our sons shall see them  
When men and women shall be born once more  
Worthy to worship thee, America.

*New York. 5, 24, '10.*

## THE VETERAN

I'M sorry for the folks who watch the whole world sit-  
ting down:  
Who can't stand up one hour a year, stay half a day in  
town,  
To see Old Glory face to face below the eagle's wings  
Bound for their last green resting place who guard  
eternal things.

There in their bivouac of the dead can they to-day for-  
get

The craft and greed, the insolence of wealth, the mut-  
tered threat

Of anarchy and hunger, as you their children do?

Or have they larger vision than ours? The river view  
At dawn's first decoration of earth no fairer lay,  
For the hazes of the Hudson have blended blue and gray.  
We will forget forebodings, unfaith, uncharity;

In the strong young lives before us, the unlined faces,  
see

The charter of man's freedom writ large for all again  
Here on our city's riverside in lines of marching men.

America, America, the bugles clear repeat.

This is the strength and cadence of a myriad marching  
feet,

The ripple of the waves of youth's untried exultant tide.  
I see to-morrow symbolized there. Behind their swing-  
ing stride,

## THE VETERAN

---

There goes the gray grand army, the remnants of the  
host  
That Lincoln, Grant and Sherman led, three score or  
four at most;  
Outdistanced, crowded to the rear, but undefeated still.  
Now all the people clap their hands, my own thin pulses  
thrill,  
Bedridden by the window here, my old eyes yet behold  
What all your millions may not buy, an honor never  
sold.

One limbs along on crutches. Get down in very shame  
Low on your knees to-night, my friends. Your hearts  
are hard and tame,  
Your souls the souls of children, who may not stay away  
From your golf links and your polo fields a single hour  
to-day.  
They pass, the pale pall bearers of the spirit of the past,  
What will you worship in their place when time takes  
home the last?

*Chatham, N. J., 5, 31, '10.*

## THE OLD GRAD

**Y**OU have watched us win the game from Yale; seen  
'02's class baby throw  
The ball out to the pitcher, watched each last mad  
Pierrot,  
Bedouins, Jockeys, Suffragettes, snake dancing sailor  
lads,  
Five acres wild, cyclonic, yellow-slickered undergrads;  
Earliest, last alumni, sixty-seven, nineteen nine,  
A dozen bands discordant, break loose then fall in line;  
Heard cheers like avalanches that helped to cinch the  
game.  
Whether you're drunk to-night or not, to-morrow will  
seem tame.



# I INSURGENTS

## *THE LIBRARIAN*

**A** MERICA!

That's a great name. From Standish straight to  
Lincoln,  
And her last soldier in the ranks to-day,  
A land to live and die for. All the world  
Waking, envisions her, its heritage;  
Sees her assailed and doubts. So have I doubted  
And slowly learned to read between the lines.

Our Reformation halts to-day. To-morrow  
We shall march on. When Huss and Wickliffe flamed,  
The living tongues of man's new Pentecost;  
Men watched and mocked, or whispered. Others went  
About their business, bribed and dealt in pardons  
And privileges, until the printer's hand  
Published the Word of God broadcast to all.

Then Luther triumphed. Slowly, very slowly  
The people wakes, and freedom wins her soil  
By handfuls red. Our martyrs march obscure,  
Mothers and babes to brothels, cotton mills.  
We print their wrongs and the world heeds. To-day  
Tetzels sells no Indulgences for murder.

Power and privilege may be bought, abused,  
No more in secret. Thus far have we won.  
Here a free press safeguards a land of freedom.

Here on these shelves ten thousand thousand tongues  
Forgotten yet eternal, testify

## THE STRAP-HANGER

..

Shadow stained and winter-weary, never see the dawn.  
Flowers and stars and running waters; sunshine, racing  
clouds,  
Stolen from our sons and daughters, wrapped in lepers'  
shrouds:

Through the reek and dust are drifting, heaven while  
we dream.  
For the night is slowly lifting. Somewhere shines the  
gleam  
Still God's multitudes are marching. Somewhere far  
away,  
Past His Subway's gloom o'er arching, dawns for all His  
day.

*New York, 12, 14, '10.*

## THE COMMUTER

**N**EW YORK in winter's hell may be. Here's  
heaven to-day and May,  
Not forty minutes from Park Row. You watch your  
children play;  
You hoe your garden beds. You see your kindergarten  
green  
Dance from the soil; and little white clad boys and girls  
between  
The shadows of the apple trees upon the dappled grass.  
Breathing his air of freedom deep you see your neighbor  
pass  
His golf bag like a quiver slung. Heart calls to heart,  
and then  
Your wife brings out the tennis net. You both grow  
young again.  
  
You hear the cries of children and the call of nesting  
birds,  
God's vox humana organ notes, His living scripture's  
words

## THE COMMUTER

---

Within His big blue dome of air. One day in seven is  
yours

Far from the slavish city and its iron lusts and lures,  
Manhattan's stony tumor and its poison cells of greed.  
We will remember beauty, on nature's fullness feed  
This afternoon; on bay and hill, in field and shaded lane,  
We will forget the care and fret, the fever and the pain.

And if it rains, the nursery, the race's fairy tales—  
And mother love's last lullaby at twilight never fails  
To bring your own dear boyhood back; your dead you  
hope to meet

Far from the gride of granite and the clamor of the  
street.

Isn't it worth the journey home, the winter's sleet and  
cold,

To know the hearth's red heart at night; your flesh and  
blood to hold,

Your fort of life, your soldier's share of Anglo Saxon  
soil?

We are God's big battalions. Daily we march to toil  
In the city's ghastly jungle where the traitors loot and  
slay.

We are to-morrow's pioneers and the heirs of yesterday.

Carve out your robber baronies, your cost of living  
raise;

We will combine and conquer you in the fullness of His  
days

When Broadway's lurid beauty fails, and Wall Street's  
gilded sham.

Here you're yourself each Sunday till you touch the  
great I Am.

*Port Washington, 8, 19, '10.*



## THE SEAMAN

**Y**OU who lie huddled in houses, land lubbers snug  
below  
When the waves are armies charging home and the  
winds their war-horns blow  
(Till the challenge of death we know);  
You who clutter and clot the street, and buy and sell  
like slaves;  
You who were sons of the Viking kings asleep in their  
deep sea graves;  
Do your fathers, seamen, fighting men, stir where they  
lie alone,  
As a ripple spreads at the slack of the tide of a shame  
they have never known?

For your Yankee blood begins to ebb, and Old Glory  
flies no more  
Around the world. Like a motor tub it creeps and hugs  
the shore.  
And your barren women shrink from pain as you turn  
and waver back,  
And the world looks on. And it races past; and the  
leaders of the pack  
Shoulder you out of every port, and fill each reeking  
slum;  
Till the day when your wealth shall waste like sand  
when the charging breakers come.

Men who were hewn from granite like the rocks of your  
Gloucester coast,  
Are yours to-day though you know them not, fit leaders  
for your host.  
And you send them out to peddle fish; and tariff ring  
and trust  
Tricksters, traders, traitors; to sate your money lust,  
Though they draw the nation's purse strings tight; their  
tribute black have paid  
To the long ships of the East and West that steal away  
your trade.

## THE SEAMAN

---

You shall build you useless Dreadnoughts if you lack  
the brains and thews  
To hold the sea and to make it pay. And aliens all  
shall use  
The water-way you make for them. You must choose;  
and lose or win.  
Your wealth has wakened greed and hate; your years  
of trial begin;  
You shall not stand still. And your blood must thrill  
and race in a restless beat  
Of the nation's heart on every tide; or tremble to defeat.

They may rivet their hold on the continents, but they  
cannot chain the sea;  
For its sons are kings of cageless things, as the winds  
and the stars are free.  
(Oh, stout hearts, follow me!)  
And we'll carry the war to Africa, to the Congo's  
shames and sins;  
And yellow men and white and black shall see the race  
that wins  
Roused like a giant from fifty years of sleep, lay hands  
again  
On the restless deep, on its last frontiers, and the mas-  
tership of men.

*Bideford, 8, 15, '11.*

## MERE MAN

**W**IVES and sweethearts of our fathers, you who  
bore your sons in pain,  
You who through the spirit's travail, shaped our child-  
hood's soul and brain;  
Wake and stir your senseless sisters. Give us beauty  
back again.

## MERE MAN

---

All our streets resound with clamor, all the earth is  
bound with steel.

This we did; and in our doing lost the time to think and  
feel:

Power's naked soul pursuing, let success our loss reveal.

All our cities seethe and fester, filled with lives whose  
loveliness

Starves and withers in the shadow, feeds on filth, nor  
knows redress;

Foul and patient, strong, distorted, triumphs through its  
sore distress.

We confess that we have blindly bred the brute that  
serves the strong,

Made a skeleton of freedom, raised our towers of greed  
and wrong,

Yet we lift the race toward Heaven through our labors  
stern and long.

Lives unborn shall profit by them, richer for our error.  
You

Who have liberty and leisure, wealth and health and  
power too;

Deify the false and ugly, and find nothing else to do.

Wives and sweethearts, mothers, sisters, strident daugh-  
ters of to-day

Who have spent your souls for nothing, who your homes  
and trusts betray,

Learn to be yourselves, inspiring; teach us all to love  
and pray.

Give us beauty, make us happy, give us children of the  
heart,

Not the changlings of the passions, heirs of slum and  
mill and mart;

Make of life a living music; crown it with eternal art.

## MERE MAN

---

Not the rags that truth outrage, but gracious garments  
of the soul,  
Not the postures of the stage, but love that plays per-  
fection's rôle,  
Not the cheap exploited page, but songs that show the  
spirit's goal.

Give us gardens, open spaces. Give us light and larger  
air,  
Flowers for all and flower-like faces; not the flaunting  
blooms you wear.  
Children's smiles, immortal graces, where your whims  
have bought despair.

Wives and sweethearts of to-morrow, heirs of sorrow,  
shame and pain,  
Of your mother's sins; of mother love that stronger  
shall remain,  
Dearer since it serves and suffers; give us beauty back  
again.

*New York, 8, 20, '10.*

## MERE WOMAN

**D**ICK is a dear, but Dick will never shine as a  
leader of men;  
And he's getting on. But promotion's slow. Though  
we may be married when  
I'm nearer thirty than twenty, and he's past thirty-five;  
The chances are we will be too poor if we're both of us  
still alive.  
Meantime I'm earning more than he, and I worry.  
Day by day  
The slow tears fall, and the wrinkles come and score my  
life away;  
Days when we might be happy together, making one  
Hunger of souls and bodies, and the dreams we've left  
undone.

## MERE WOMAN

---

And it isn't much that we ask for; a home in the open  
air,  
A garden under God's own trees and children's voices  
there;  
Friends that the years shall prove with us, neighbors  
whose lives shall grow  
From the selfsame soil, to the selfsame stars, we learn  
of here below.

All of it costs us more and more, and Heaven on earth  
is won  
Harder and harder every day, through the things we  
leave undone.  
From a million Dicks, from a million mes, they are steal-  
ing day by day,  
Dollar by dollar, cent by cent, the joy of life away.  
Tariffs and rebates, stifle faith and hope and charity.  
We have forgotten freedom who thought that we were  
free;  
Beauty is lost in shadows black, and the city's ceaseless  
noise.  
Meantime our lifetime's music, creation's common joys  
Free to the poorest savage, by falseness we replace;  
Life is a walker of the streets. We help to paint her  
face.

We have watered the blood of millions to spill her costly  
wine.  
And starving babes go naked that her harlot's robes  
may shine.  
From the slums we build her palaces. Her lovers tax  
us all,  
Masters of many millions, who teach men's souls to  
crawl.  
We give them youth and beauty and our years of bar-  
renness,  
And all the lovely things of life that sanctify and bless.

## MERE WOMAN

---

This have they torn from each sad heart, but O my dear,  
my dear!  
The hours they hold us two apart and shall this many a  
year.

*New York, 8, 8, '10.*

## THE OLD MAID

**Y**OU want to hear the woman's side? You've cried  
till you are leaden-eyed.  
You'll not to-night, my limelight's bride. There are so  
many sides beside;  
The nation's with its multitude, the children's and your  
childish own,  
And his who is a child as crude, unfit like you to stand  
alone.  
For Mother Nature makes us all the children of her  
latter day.  
She makes machines to grind men small, and gowns that  
steal your grace away.  
She gives you hats to hide your brains. You hold them  
up with leper's hair.  
She hobbles you with silken chains. She laces prisons  
that you wear.  
She crushes you and lives unborn within her weakest,  
vainest mold,  
She makes America the scorn of all the world, while  
love grows cold.

This has your Mother Nature done, since manicured and  
corseted,  
You hide her children from the sun; sew up your lives  
with basting thread.  
You have forgotten how to run, to breathe, to climb;  
her heights to scale.  
And childish wonder, infant fun, since you are fools,  
you scorn; and fail.

## THE OLD MAID

---

You urge your men to make machines that dollars  
squeeze from dying souls.

You shift to Transatlantic scenes your morbid moving  
picture rolls:

You leave your men a grafters' game. They gamble for  
a continent;

And murder, suicide and shame your alimonies repre-  
sent.

You breathe the demimondaine's air, the demimondaine's  
dishes eat;

You wear her harness; everywhere you trail the sweep-  
ings of the street.

And men who have their work to do, that you have  
taught to live alone;

Must retrograde when you pursue, and find false loves  
to make their own.

For you have freedom which you waste, and obligation  
which you scorn,

And happiness you spoil with haste. And so a nation's  
sins are born.

These are the children that you bear, who fancy you are  
rich and free.

Beggared in spirit, weak, unfair; the freedom of the  
hills and sea,

The strength that lives in mother love, that triumphs  
though the body dies;

That lifts the brute to things above; since Paris is your  
Paradise;

You have neglected like yourself, like Nature's warn-  
ings you neglect.

And so men lay you on the shelf. What else in—  
Heaven—can you expect?

*New York, 1, 23, '11.*

## THE INSURGENT

**N**EITHER with money nor class, nor sectional hate  
we fight.

These are but little things, counters and charts of change.  
One with the universe like the birth of a mountain  
range,  
Out of the nether deeps of life and the darkness of the  
night;

Slowly we rise like the wave that lifts itself from the  
sea,  
Skyward climbs for a space, and lapses and leaves be-  
hind  
The hollow, the halt, the sag. And some in its trough  
are blind,  
Stolid, unstirred by the impulse sure of the better days  
to be.

Slowly we come like the light that silently fills the land  
With the splendor, the beauty, the joy and the truth that  
the shadows have veiled.

Shadows of horror and hate were here; to-day they  
have faded and failed.

Your Inquisitions are dead and gone. The things of the  
Spirit stand.

Slowly we grow like the grain that out of the blackness  
is born,

Harrowed and winnowed and ground in the mills of  
God's purpose and pain;

Broken a sacrament for all, and buried in blackness  
again:

And the wave of life in us rises and falls, and midnight  
follows morn;

And day unto night succeeds; and the race is rising  
still,

Slowly and surely ever; thwarted and turned aside



## THE INSURGENT

---

Now for a year, for ten; and again the turn of the tide  
Shall sweep your tariff walls away, and souls that starve  
shall fill.

Children are maimed in your mills. Men in your mines  
are slain.

Women are sold in your streets. These are eddies and  
ripples of wrong

That ever retreats and hides, in the blackness. And  
Hell is strong

Only wherever we let it live, and our profits take from  
pain.

And stronger steamers still must master the storms of  
the sea.

Ever more grain men sow and sell and a wider world  
is fed.

And science more surely wins its way, and a larger  
light is shed

On the mind of man that mounts and falls, and strug-  
gles and must be free.

*Paris, 6, 24, '11.*

## II THE SERVICES

### *THE RANGER*

I'M a stranger to your cities and the dangers they are  
breeding;  
Like the reek of stony jungles in whose horror hides a  
beast;  
Where the fire that steals below the earth on roots of  
life is feeding,  
I was born there, but I hated it, an alien in the East.

I'm a ranger of the forests as my fathers were before  
me,  
Viking sea-kings, Anglo-Saxons, scouts and trappers,  
pioneers;  
Always freemen and the masters of the mother earth  
that bore me,  
That you scar and mar and mangle with your engines  
and your gears.

Through the shadow, through the silence, I go climbing,  
softly, slowly,  
Till the birds have ceased their singing, and the snow  
peaks through the trees  
Light their altar fires of freedom, high and colorless and  
holy;  
And to breathe becomes a sacrament. My soul upon her  
knees,

Sees the pine trees torn and thwarted by the wrestling  
winds of ages  
Hold their own, win onward, upward to the snow-line  
and the void,

## THE RANGER

---

Marching pilgrims of the Nations; martyrs, prophets,  
saints and sages

Who have led men up too near to God to live. Not all  
destroyed,

Like the strength of standing timber in the heat of red  
Septembers

Burned to black and barren embers in the furnace of  
your haste;

They have smeared your map with murder. But the  
Ranger's heart remembers.

And their ghosts shall rise and haunt you for the hap-  
piness you waste.

Like the loveliness your blindness lost, like manhood's  
conservation,

In these citadels of silence undermined and set at naught,  
While you whittle huts of tinder, print the treasons of a  
nation,

While the world looks on and wonders at this people  
sold and bought.

We were free and you have sold us. We were false  
and we submitted.

We were blind and went a-whoring after freedom far  
away.

Now you steal our forests from us. From our lost fron-  
tier unfitted,

We are forced to turn and deal with you or die like  
slaves to-day.

*New York, 1, 2, '11.*

## RECLAMATION

**Y**OU know the desert from the train, the sage brush  
and the sky;  
The saw toothed mountains on its edge like islands on  
the sea;  
The dust, the glare, the heat of it. You gasped, you hur-  
ried by.  
You never grasped the vision and the beauty that shall  
be.

Here where the waves of ocean rolled like meadows wide  
and green,  
The land was slowly lifted up; the water ebbed away  
Till earth's first reclamation stood. And Titans set the  
scene  
For this triumph of creation and the drama of to-day.

Over huddled foothill suburbs below their mountain wall,  
The warders of the desert from their watch towers of  
the skies  
Look out and see the trains, the farms, the houses, closer  
crawl;  
And watch man's big battalions draw near, with hostile  
eyes.

We are your pioneers who pierce the mountain passes  
through.  
Here at the angle of the wall the valley opens out.  
We fortify this strong redoubt. We build this dam for  
you.  
And all the angered powers of air shall gather with a  
shout.

They shall send their hordes to shake it, and the floods  
shall surge and rage,  
They shall sap its firm foundations. But their prison's  
strength shall hold.  
We are the warders of the world's last vast heroic age.

## RECLAMATION

---

We keep the peace that men may turn the desert's sands  
to gold.

No more with tower and battlement man builds to baffle  
man,  
Here on life's last frontier. Against the power that  
wastes and harms  
We rear this final rampart of creation's perfect plan.  
That nature's subject nations may till your children's  
farms.

We have staked out a nation's claim. Go up and occupy.  
Here is your promised land at last. Redeemed from  
sordid strife  
You shall look up and learn to serve; like mountain side  
and sky  
Out of your fullness share with all the water clear of  
life.

*St. John, Newfoundland, 7, 17, '10.*

## THE ENSIGN

WHEN Drake sailed forth from Devonshire our  
fathers ruled the sea.  
They flung their ensigns to the world free as the winds  
are free.  
When the Yankee clippers beat the rest Old Glory ad-  
vertised  
In every port on every breeze the best your brain de-  
vised.  
But you who help to crowd it out, who clip the eagle's  
wings,  
With every coupon that you cut have lost more precious  
things  
Than Yankee millions, Yankee maids, for worthless ti-  
tles sold

## THE ENSIGN

---

On Dutch and Dago cargo boats. The nations now behold

Our Viking blood retreating. Not England's loss alone  
Have we to-day to reckon with. Her peril is our own.

We must go forth to meet our foes. The race decadent  
dies

That shrinks behind its battlements. Your tariff ramparts  
rise.

In vain your trusts and tyrannies shall concentrate their  
power;

When freemen, seamen, pioneers of ocean every hour  
Are lost to you; and hour by hour Japan and Germany  
The whole Pacific steal from you, the markets that shall  
be

When the far East awakes, and we too late with it shall  
wake.

You have side tracked our subsidies. Your bribes you  
give and take.

You prate of native registries, and freemen here deny  
Their Yankee right to bargain, in the cheapest market  
buy

The ships that yet might save us. You are either knaves  
or fools

You business men, you Congress men, prize idiots of  
schools

That problems prove on paper, and swear that nature's  
wrong

When she goes her way regardless. The battle's to the  
strong.

And day by day we're weaker, less regarded in the East,  
When prestige money means and power. And mandarin  
and priest

Spit on our flag and shame it, the same your crimes de-  
fame,

## THE ENSIGN

---

Your grafting and your watered stock. Your treasons  
shrewd and tame  
You match against Samauri. Your yellow peril grows;  
The gold that drugs your jaundiced souls and makes the  
world your foes.

*Montreal, 7, 12, '10.*

## THE JACKY

**W**E were watching the crowd in a rathskellar joint  
getting busy with pretzels and beer;  
And two sports and their dolls had to sit down beside us.  
And all of them looked mighty queer.  
The girls drew their skirts up. One Willie boy said  
"My Gawd, it's a rotten disgrace!  
What in hell are we coming to, when common sailors  
like these can't be kept in their place?  
I'd as soon have my shover here." I near cut loose.  
But O'Leary remarked "Lad, belay,  
Don't lower yourself to their level." And so we stayed  
there till they went away  
Smoking quarter cigars. And we lapped up Martinis,  
till when we got back to the yard  
There were sixty ships there in the light of the moon.  
And this morning I'm taking it hard.

Now I come from a farm in Dakota as big as some of  
these little old states;  
And my dad has the dollars to buy up a bank, or bunches  
of Broadway's cheap skates.  
That's not the point maybe. What I want to know is,  
exactly where we are all at  
When Uncle Sam's uniform's classed with chauffeurs  
who graft on your joy-riders. That  
There's a raft of hotels here, you're likely to know, or  
more, where they show us the door;

## THE JACKEY

---

Where when I change my clothes and have money to  
burn I'm hep. I'm not making a roar.  
When I'm out by myself I can go where I like. First  
class electricians to-day,  
Get midshipman's wages. I'm one. And I'm seeing the  
world. And I'm paying my way.

There are hundreds like me that the Navy has made.  
And we're proud we are Jackies. And so  
We stand by our messmates you try to degrade, the men  
to whom safety you owe;  
That you drive into dives out of dives if your own where  
money's the one drawing card;  
And niggers and Chinks, soldiers, Jackies alone, and the  
scum of the gutters are barred.  
Do you wonder that we take it hard?

And you grudge us our ships. And you talk. And you  
play with your programs machine made of peace.  
Can you arbitrate race? Between yellow and white?  
And you watch the world's navies increase.  
And you give up to grafting police.  
Now if wearing of clothes and extracting of cash are  
the only two things you can do,  
They are going to seem of all things in the world most  
important to people like you.  
And New York's got a million or more made like that.  
And then some. And then also a few.

If there's anything else in the world that's worth while,  
and America's built to be free,  
It won't pay you to sneer at us Jackies too long, your  
policemen whose beat is the sea.  
That's a fact. You can take it from me.

*Bideford, 8, 16, '11.*



## MATER CENTURIONIUM

**Y**OU haven't much use for the army, you women  
who help in the slums.  
You call them all uniformed loafers, white savages with  
their war drums,  
Cave-men unevolved, and reverting to type, to primordial  
brute.  
You say we can't make them less brutal when we teach  
them to drill and to shoot.  
We grant you their long evolution. Your own finer  
fibers are twined  
With the lusts of the ages' begetting. Do you dream  
you have left them behind?  
You see life that gropes in the gutters. You raise it.  
You make it your own,  
And for this you believe you can brand with contempt  
these men that you never have known.  
So you cheapen the lives of your sisters. Millinery and  
rhythm you say  
Are motives barbaric, hypnotic, that the world is out-  
growing to-day.  
Superficial, intolerant, childish, you scorn the material  
sign  
Of discipline's sacrament raising the brute to its serv-  
ice divine.  
You haven't much use for the Church since its servants  
so often are fools.  
Well the church and the army are twins, the Creator's  
most capable tools,  
Rightly used. You look down on the army. If you ever  
could take it away  
Just how long would your tenure of life, of honor, of  
freedom to-day  
Be likely to last? Just how long would the wild beasts  
that toil in your slums  
Lick your hands, lap the milk you set out; those anar-  
chists, hoboes, and bums  
You class with our soldiers, my sisters, when you see  
two or three of them fall?

## MATER CENTURIONIUM

---

Better say that all men are alike. Yes; for heroes are hidden in all.

I have seen them evolve from the gutters. On the trails that Apaches dyed red,

I've nursed them and stifled their ravings and bound up their wounds when they bled.

I have watched their last lights flicker out; found them patient and loyal and brave;

Heard them leap forth to death with a shout; laid my own soldier lads in the grave.

And it's made me a mother of men, their loss and my long travail pains,

Till I worship the Flag like the Cross. You are barren. Your bodies and brains

Have never been sanctified, sealed, tortured, disciplined, tempered and tried;

Your fitness through struggle revealed. You your nation's foundations deride,

You are blind, and you let them alone; and your blindness estranges and harms,

Finding flaws in your firm corner-stone, and but brutes in your brothers at arms.

*Toronto, 7, 11, '11.*

## THE SERGEANT

**T**HIS is a fact. This Bertie came out of some Eastern slum,

A cave-man up to date who damned mankind to kingdom come,

Because the cops were after him. We shipped him West. Because

The W. C. T. U. can make our congressmen and laws, And think they can abolish thirst by closing the canteen;

He used to spend his time on leave in grogeries obscene,

## THE SERGEANT

---

Like ulcers in a drunkard's stomach eating life away  
From Uncle Sam. Still Bertie learned to love the Flag.

One day

Some thug or tin-horn gambler took a flag from off the  
wall

And wiped the bar with it. Said he to Bertie "That  
is all

Your damned old rag is good for." So Bertie knocked  
him flat.

And when the gang closed in on him he simply told them  
that

He'd fight the bunch together or one by one so long  
As they'd leave the flag alone. "I've sworn to guard  
it, and I'm strong

To stand for that," says Bertie. Say I'm lying if you  
will,

But the biggest mucker of them all made good. He  
swore he'd kill

The man who laid his hand on Bertie or Old Glory.  
Then

They raised our flag behind the bar and drank like gen-  
tlemen.

No, I don't know where Bertie is. He may have gone  
to hell.

He may be headed otherwise. I think so. Mighty well  
He learned his work and loved it till they drafted him  
away.

That's a hell of a lot it seems to me on fifty cents a day.  
It's not our pay that holds us and that keeps our honor  
clean

As our uniforms. We haven't got the grafter's greased  
machine

To tip us to our rake-offs. We don't belly ache for  
more.

But you take our comforts from us, and tin-horn, thug  
and whore.

## THE SERGEANT

---

Make up to us. They're worse than you? Your women  
turn away:

Won't have us in your restaurants; look down on us  
to-day.

We ain't no kids in Sunday-schools. My son, the devil's  
tools

Whether in silk or calico are mostly common fools.

*New York, 6, 12, '10.*

## ELLIS ISLAND

**S**URE she'll be deported since the man she lived for  
died,

Little Dago widow, now no more to be a bride.

This one's going back beside. His eyes are on the blink.

Say, it must be simply hell. Just try to stop and think.

S'pose you heard of heaven on earth, a land of liberty,

Prairie furrows full of gold, your heart's desire to be;

S'pose you came in sight of it, and found you couldn't  
see;

Outcast of the universe. This sure is judgment day.

Here they trade in tragedies, these ships that tear away

Lovers from their happiness, their homes and hillsides  
fair,

So that we can sell to them the sweat-shop's reeking air;

For their trust new tyranny, for freedom's name despair.

So the strongest shall survive. Where Jews and Huns  
succeed

Still they crowd in closer, help to starve our Yankee  
breed;

Sell their votes to grafters and the boss of the machine;

Drag us all down faster than we learn to make them  
clean.

War is hell and trade is war between the nations now,  
Year by year their millions to invade us we allow.

Year by year their thousands our millions take away,

Tribute that America to all the world must pay.

## ELLIS ISLAND

---

Year by year the tariff raises prices, and the trust  
And the Jews and Dagoes get the difference. We must  
Soon or late decide to fix a tariff high on men.  
Twenty million wage slaves demand it dumbly. When  
A million Yankee babies by a million alien lives  
Each year are crowded out unborn; it's not the fit sur-  
vives.

Say, we've bitten off a damn sight more than we can  
chew;

Then to quit a swallowing's the simplest thing to do.  
Some day we'll digest this mess and maybe swallow more.  
Till then shut the gates up tight—or else prepare for  
war.

*New York, 10, 18, '10.*

## LIGHTHOUSES

**T**O-DAY it's truce the signals say. Along the sea's  
frontier  
From Eastport to Key West, the sky is cloudless blue  
and clear,  
And winds and waves are all asleep. It happens once a  
year.

I like to think of other keepers sitting in the sun,  
And smoking pipes and playing cards, an army out for  
fun,  
Just as I like to feel their strength on nights when war's  
begun.

It's lonely? Yes. And yet it's not. I see the ships  
go by,  
I watch the glass, I gauge the changing color of the sky.  
I feel the tides of calm and storm that ebb and eddy  
high,

Like pulses of the universe. Somehow I've grown in  
tune

## LIGHTHOUSES

---

To the long music of the sea, the changes of the moon  
That mark the tides; the seasons' swing from Christmas  
round to June.

It's big and broad and fair and free. The city's stagnant  
air

I could not live in; just to see the houses huddled there,  
And faces scarred with greed and fear and anger and  
despair.

Your soldier, chemist, all who walk the sentry lines of  
life;

Your poet, painter, engineer; your surgeon with his  
knife,

Must strive and struggle on alone. The elements at  
strife,

Have made a better battle ground than any crowded  
street

That reeks with mud and misery and souls that meet  
defeat.

I clean my lenses here alone. I hear my engines beat.

From my high conning tower I send the search lights  
strong of peace

Into the blackness and beyond. And sailors see release  
From doubt and dread; and death's dark hand draws  
back till shadows cease,

And daylight's shifting beam again shines square and  
splendid here.

Geared to the clockwork of the skies we make life's  
message clear.

One with the sun and moon and stars, our hands bring  
heaven more near.

*Bideford, 30, 7, '11.*

## SECRET SERVICE

**G**OD moves in a mysterious way, they say. The  
devil too

Has fifty thousand aliases, disguises, points of view.  
It's taken me some fifty years to tabulate a few.

It's taken fifty thousand years to learn to tabulate  
Their measurements and finger prints; to charge this  
to the State;

To learn that crime's a world disease, its periodic rate

To figure out. How can you tell a crook you're asking  
me.

How can you tell which men are sick, which well?

You can't. You see

Some criminals, a little child could spot them instantly.

Others are more like you and me. Their lesions are  
obscure,

The first faint tubercles of crime that time can kill or  
cure.

That no one of us is immune to germs of sin you're  
sure?

You're right, my son. The only way to get ahead of  
crime

Is just to disinfect men's souls where Satan pours his  
slime

Into his slums' black culture tubes; and to get next in  
time.

When fools for fifty thousand years begin to open eyes  
It's not one wink that does the trick. The cave man  
lifeless lies.

The Shaman picks his scapegoat out. One tortured vic-  
tim dies

## SECRET SERVICE

---

To stay the plague. And likewise we our murderers  
to-day  
Electrocute; our counterfeiters safely lock away;  
And let men issue watered stock for which we all must  
pay.

We let them murder thousands in their training schools  
of hell,  
Where boys and girls go on the streets in gangs or  
singly. Well,  
You have to pay for all of this, how dearly, time shall  
tell.

I match myself with specialists in crime. I win a game  
For which both sides are fitted, while you tax, torment  
and maim,  
Till little children turn to sin, insanity and shame.

I trap my Black Hand leaders, my black-mailers bring  
to book,  
But the blackest hands of all go free. Then let your  
science look  
For stronger anti-toxines till no child is born a crook.  
*Paris, 5, 17, '11.*

## DIPLOMACY

**I**T'S damn bad advertising and economy beside,  
It slights the world's great nations and it ought to  
hurt our pride.  
It's living on from hand to mouth. Your multi-million-  
aire  
Who hires a palacé, quits the job. You send a poor man  
there.  
He rents a top floor flat; and so the nation loses face,  
This congressional chess paring's international disgrace.



## DIPLOMACY

---

I was a backwoods congressman. I've log rolled with  
the best.

I took a trip abroad last year. When I got back out  
West

I told my chief constituents, "Wake up, get wise! To-  
day

Your Uncle Sam is on the blink from Lisbon to Cathay."

Three things there are that rule the world. There's  
money, force and — well —

That social savior ma calls tact. We've got the first.  
Oh, hell!

We've got the gold that tempts them, and that envy  
breeds and hate.

We're easy money, easy marks where we're not up to  
date.

That's over there. And over here as insults to their  
pride

We've got a tabloid army and militia graft beside.

And we go on and rub it in where Uncle Sam keeps  
house

In tenements, or marble halls where money makes ca-  
rouse.

Now there's an old time dignity, our fathers used to  
know,

We're working back to slowly as this nation learns to  
grow.

There's a nation's hospitality where'er that nation goes,  
For its own blood, for aliens too. We've got the gold  
God knows;

We've got the men. We've raised the standard slowly  
down below.

But higher up we've got to standardize the goods we  
show.

We've got to have the houses and big business houses  
too

## DIPLOMACY

---

To hold our share of this world's trade. And now it's  
up to you  
If we the people, people's palaces in every land  
Cannot or won't put up for; we've got to understand  
To get the goods to throw a front, you've got to ad-  
vertise,  
And the nation or the firm that won't, that firm or na-  
tion dies.

*New York, I, 27, '11.*

### III THE ARTS

#### THE SCULPTOR

**N**OW turn your head this way a minute. Now lift  
your eyes. Now look at me.  
That brain shall show me what is in it. The lips stay  
shut. But we shall see.  
Boss, masterbuilder, million breeder, the soul of char-  
tered greed to-day,  
Of despots dead, to-morrow's feeder, this hour my or-  
ders you obey.

Those pirate eyes gaze on unblinking. If I could see the  
slaves they see  
Walking the plank and shrinking, sinking, I should not  
fear you. I am free.  
For I have toiled and suffered greatly; I struggle still  
and strive to climb,  
And so my art stands strong and stately and safe against  
the storms of time.  
And neither man nor woman fears me, and only fools  
and critics hate.  
And every triumph still endears me to all the world that  
makes me great.

## THE SCULPTOR

---

I hand them still in heaping measure installments of the  
debt I owe.

I have translated truth and pleasure in terms of strength  
and beauty. So

This world, man's soul must make its mirror, gives back  
to me my lawful due:

For I have made it fairer, clearer. And so my friend,  
it deals with you.

For you were born of shame and error. And out of  
strife your soul grew strong,

To rule through treason, greed and terror; that right-  
eousness might rise from wrong.

Out of the slum that formed and fitted your infant sin-  
ews to survive,

Your spirit's embryo permitted to dominate this granite  
hive,

The Master sculptor's wisdom made you from sweepings  
of his studio.

And we betrayed you, we degrade you, who suffer you  
to serve us so.

For so the Master's purpose ever has shaped the blind  
to lead the blind.

He set your soul of grim endeavor the limits of the  
brute to find;

The force that lays the broad foundations, that shapes  
with steel and steam and gold,

The destinies of new world nations; that like yourself is  
bought and sold.

And so the starving millions yield you the tribute wrung  
from greed and hate.

And greater greed and hatred shield you, the lust of  
power that makes you great.

And I who read men's hearts and faces, discern within  
your somber soul

## THE SCULPTOR

---

Through fleshly scars and black disgraces, a life that  
seeks a larger goal:  
Through iron lips now loosed in slumber, beneath the  
mask that time shall break,  
A heart that love's own hours shall number, when Life  
the sculptor bids you wake.

*New York, 3, 4, '11.*

## THE CASTER

**S**AINTE GAUDENS? Yes, I knew him too. There  
was an artist and a man.

He toiled as though eternity he had and not this mortal  
span

To work in; so he took his time and what he did was  
done to last.

Oh, it was strong and beautiful. To-day the young men  
follow fast

Impressionism nude and crude; Rodin and nature cari-  
cature.

Some take the easiest way, grow rich, throw lumps of  
mud at art, obscure

The public's taste and truth itself. Barbarians still must  
worship so

Their shapeless images of stone like Tyre and Sidon  
long ago.

And for my sins I make the molds. But science whis-  
pers "These things too

The ugly and deformed and false, in truth's clear sight  
are records true."

They mark the limits of the race, mistakes that must be  
made till man

Through imperfection out of toil evolves and shapes the  
perfect plan.

Tombstones of souls that art has lost, they serve their  
purpose for a day.

## THE CASTER

---

By-products of the beautiful, like *cire perdu* they pass  
away.

For art is patience, loving, long; and justice that can let  
alone

The surface where the soul is strong; and charity that  
can atone

For all that lies beneath the mask that mortal weakness  
has to wear.

But these are tricksters in their hearts that he himself  
could never spare.

Look at his Lincoln. There you see the patience that  
we lack to-day,

Americans whose motors, tickers, race and rasp their  
nerves away.

Look at his Sherman. Victory starts from the trees and  
down the street

She leads her leader to the sea again. I hear the tread  
of feet.

And she is Art, the form ideal great soldiers feel through  
steel and fire,

Like men who made our Avenue whose vistas to the  
skies aspire.

Marching through Georgia fills the air, I stand there,  
Regiments in blue

Still in the spirit through the blare of motors tramp.  
We follow too

Whose faith can find New York to-day a wonder city  
spinning slow

Its art's cocoon. Our architects have spread their wings,  
Skyscrapers grow.

I am a private in the ranks, Saint Gaudens taught my  
eyes to see

That art is discipline and love that strength leads on to  
Victory.

*Bideford, 17, 8, '11.*

## THE PORTRAIT PAINTER

**T**HIS is the kind of thing that makes life cheap and tame.

Why do I do it then? One has to gain a name;  
Something to advertise, to hypnotize the crowd;  
Women with money, time to waste, insatiate, loud;  
Like demimondaines dressed, with demimondaines'  
brains,

Manners and morals too. They pay me for my pains.  
All the essential brute I brazen forth, suggest;  
To each her costume suit, her color scheme, the rest  
That brands, that flays, betrays, each shameless, naked  
soul.

Am I art's pander? No. Suppose some woman stole  
Into your heart and laughed; stripped you, and left you  
bare.

These are life's parasites. My portraits may not spare.  
I am art's surgeon so, predestined and elect.  
I cut your cancers out. I seize, dissect, detect.  
I show New York itself. My money and my fame,  
By-products are of power I wrest from ugliness and  
shame.

I your demand supply, the ugliness you breed,  
Children of greed, of speed that must at any cost suc-  
ceed.

I paint the naked truth. So I my youth invest;  
Win liberty from slavery. Wait till you see the rest.

For I hold fast my dreams; children who save the soul,  
Women who bear them nobly, men who find their goal  
High o'er the crowded streets, and through their treas-  
ons win;

Childlike and clean of heart. I see the dawn begin,  
Snow peaks and sky aflame and sunlight on the sea,  
Clear eyes too true for shame, the beauty that shall be.  
I shall unveil my Grail till Sargent's prophets stand,  
New wonder in their gaze. Earth's fairest father land,  
Virgins and soldier saints, to you I yet shall give.  
I am your youth that paints and slowly learns to live.

*New York, 7, 27, '10.*

## THE POET

**H**OW shall you fashion your song?  
How shall you image your art,  
Poet, that centuries long  
It may last, and may never depart  
From the ear, and the brain and the heart; may remain a  
treasure for ages to be;  
A landmark afar in the plain that the eyes of the multi-  
tude see;  
And a measure of pleasure and pain for the souls that  
awake and are free?

Not as one carveth a gem;  
Secluded, secure and alone;  
For the front of a king's diadem,  
Or a statue of Parian stone:  
While the setting is left unto chance, and the gem and  
the statue are lost;  
Like the glory of Greece, like the gleam of a lance, like  
the crystals that form in the frost;  
As armies retire and advance, and nations like navies  
are tossed.

Not as one buildeth a spire,  
Like two hands that are lifted in prayer;  
Or a tongue of ineffable fire  
Alive, and immortal in air;  
For our spires are dwarfed and are hid by our sky-  
scraper summits to-day,  
And the laws of our lifetime forbid we should pray as  
our fathers could pray.  
Let your song be a strong pyramid that shall shadow the  
multitude's way.

It shall stand as the mountains shall stand  
Like the visible stairs of the skies,  
All the beauty and breadth of the land  
They gather and raise as they rise.

## THE POET

---

And the fire that in millions of hearts flamed hopeless  
shall triumph in thee.  
And the choir that in silence departs shall aspire to the  
soul's symphony.  
And the wave of all life and its arts shall leap higher  
toward its heaven to be.

*Boston, 7, 23, '10.*

## THE NOVELIST

**N**ORRIS is gone. We shall not see his like till the  
splendor of conquering light  
Scatters the shadows; and truth that he lived, that he  
learned like a seraph to write;  
Born of some boy that is bent o'er a book or that fol-  
lows the furrows to-day;  
Rises triumphant enduring and strong, to stand while  
the world wastes away.

We who are left at the slack of the ebb and who wait  
for the turn of the tide;  
Seeing the blackness, the mud on the flats, the defilement  
that nothing can hide;  
And the scum of the slum, and the riot and reek, as time  
the grim surgeon lays bare  
Entrails of cities diseased, while they shriek in wild in-  
articulate prayer:

Seeing the swarming of things that must crawl and creep  
through the slime of the street,  
Creatures that covet the earnings of all and the food  
that we force them to eat;  
Broker and harlot and banker and thief, like the life  
that the foreshore reveals  
When the waters flow backward; the hunger and hor-  
ror and sin that no surgery heals.



## THE NOVELIST

---

Seeing the weakness that trickles and thrills through  
the shallows; the froth and the foam  
Whipped into air by a whisper of wind, and the ripples  
that never run home;  
Seeing the waste and unwisdom of life on its surface;  
the stories that we  
Tell of its trifles; how shall we be sure of the tide that  
sets in from the sea?

For the little men make of the little they see their novels  
for children and fools,  
Lasting as smoke, or the love of their craft that handles  
machines for its tools.  
They have forgotten the faith of their fathers. They  
surfeit the people with lies  
Shallow, uncertain, unreal, uninspiring; the soul of them  
sickens and dies.

This that they sold for a song, that environment stifles  
with greed and with doubt;  
This that men murder with noise and with haste, I have  
lived and have languished without.  
I have wrestled with angels of hunger and cold and pain  
and perdition alone.  
And at last in the soul of a nation that wakes from its  
sins I am finding my own.

So I have written some lines that shall live, of the truth  
that calls cowards to stand.  
I have witnessed anew to the new reformation that  
sweeps and that searches the land.  
I have heard a new word of the Master of life, and the  
strength that in splendor shall hide  
The shames that He bares for our healing to-day; till  
He comes at the turn of His tide.

..

*Paris, 6, 14, '11.*

## THE DANCER

**Y**OU'RE a New Yorker, a woman reporter. Shall  
I talk to you in hexameters?  
In classic measures and rhymeless verses? Is this the  
copy your page prefers?  
Outside the city careers and curses. Yet I held them  
here in a breathless trance,  
This mob that Manhattan once more immerses, and back  
from Athens I brought the dance.

What does it look like over the foot-lights? I am alone  
in a sounding shell  
Where to-day to its death in to-morrow verges, I treat  
the sands of pleasure as well,  
And out of the silence urges, surges, the pulse of pas-  
sion, the throb of pain;  
Till all in a storm and in thunder merges and I am a  
tongue of flame again.

What do I symbol, what am I saying? What are the  
words in our modern speech?  
Child, can't you see how the winds are playing with the  
surge of the surf on a barren beach,  
Here on the verge of an endless ocean, and the blasts  
like a band of Bacchanals play?  
All I translate into living motion. And I open the eyes  
of the world to-day.

So I go back into twilight dimmer, to the lava fires, to  
the dawn of time,  
To the birth of the race, to the records grimmer, when  
the apes made love till they learned to climb;  
Till they learned to stand, till they mastered terror as  
they mastered fire, till with level eyes  
They looked at the sun through a mist of error, and out  
of their dreams made a Paradise.

Can't you come back to the world's first morning while  
I dance with you through an Eden new

## THE DANCER

---

Naming the world, till the serpent's warning hisses and  
stabs you through and through;  
Till the angel of darkness earth enfolding raises the sun-  
set's sword of flame?  
And Adam's a child whose hand you're holding till you  
turn to the twilight whence you came?  
This is the tale I make clear and focal till the eyes of  
the world awake and see.  
I am a motive vital, vocal, and my flesh is the soul of a  
symphony.  
Here is the shell by a shoreless ocean; held to your ear  
your life you hear;  
Pulses tuned to the Cosmic motion; like the beat of my  
feet till they disappear.

*New York, 2, 22, '11.*

## THE SOPRANO

**A**LL the murmurs of the forests, all the clangors of  
the mines,  
Blend and break, and grow together as each motive  
twists and twines;  
Grows and turns to living beauty like a screen of climb-  
ing vines:  
Blossoming below the snowline of some mountain peak  
of song.  
All the orchestra's a jungle, wild, primeval, loud and  
strong.  
And its voices are the echoes of the ages stern and long,  
That evolved the vox humana. So I steal upon the  
stage  
While the oboes and the cellos and the brasses shriek  
and rage;  
Till the house grows hushed to hear. The leader turns  
another page.  
I begin. I breathe as soft as any breeze that comes to  
cool

## THE SOPRANO

---

Rocks that summer bears aloft, and ripples round some shaded pool.  
All the circles breathing softly halt at heaven's vestibule.  
All the voices of the city, all its clamors and its cries,  
All its prayers and aspirations my arpeggios harmonize  
In a cry that seeks the sky; that soars and dares your souls to rise.  
All its anguish, all its travail, all its sobs and sighs of pain,  
All its lies, its lusts, its hatred, all its greed and love of gain,  
Tuned to overtones transcending human heart and mortal brain:  
Speak through me in this my hour. And all the faces I can see  
Weary, weak or dowered with power, shall alter strangely, fearfully,  
Into hidden beauty flower; and time is made eternity.  
You are merely men and women. You will leave me, you will go  
From my snow peak to the shadows where the groves are green below;  
Where your hands have builded houses and the homes of want and woe.  
There your money dwarfs the mountains. There the housetops hide the day.  
There in haste you play with passion and your hearts forget to pray.  
And the days and hours and seconds of your spirits waste away.  
Merely mortal, men and women, some day you shall hear me there;  
Hear some echo of the ages through your triumph or despair;  
Hear my voice supernal soaring, while you halt at heaven's stair.

*New York, 7, 22, '11.*

## IL MAESTRO

YOU cuddle it close below your chin,  
You make a child of your violin,  
You play as a woman will, wistfully;  
Till music's Madonna in you I can see.  
But mine is a key, a master key.

I hold it tight in my tyrant's hands,  
And all doors fly open at my demands.  
And all hearts must echo each croon and cry,  
And the notes that soar like a prayer or a sigh,  
That knock at the door of air in the sky.

I can make you laugh. I can make you weep.  
I can lull men's sorrows and shames to sleep.  
I can lighten the care that weighs like lead.  
I can set the crown of a king on your head.  
I can bring back days that are past and dead,

I can waken madness and lust and hate.  
I can make you feel you are tempting fate.  
And the women loved me since I could play  
On their nerves and their heart-strings. Until to-day  
I carried their kisses and dollars away.

And you say that it clipped my spirit's wings.  
It may be so, but it tuned my strings.  
For many must sorrow and toil forlorn,  
Grub in life's garden, grasp but a thorn;  
That one blossom of genius may be born.

From a rich man's house I turned away  
To play to the poor in the street to-day.  
Never before have I played so well  
For I knew how near may be Heaven and Hell.  
Dear, I am here of both to tell.

*Wells, 8, 23, '11.*

## THE PHOTOGRAPHER

WHERE shall we find them still, the vital faces  
Each in its strength a fortress and a shrine;  
Sign of man's triumph o'er the world's disgraces,  
Of things enduring, perfect, dear, divine.

Where the despair and riot of the city  
Stifles and blinds and makes the bravest dumb?  
Where some rare passion of insurgent pity  
Redeems the wrecks and murders of the slum?

We have no face of Christ. The old Tradition  
Saw one supreme Composite of the race.  
To-day where service bows before ambition  
Our haste has never found a Savior's face.

We have no face of Mary, maiden mother,  
Sister to Magdalen and Martha. We  
Who in our tenements of death dare smother  
One helpless child have slain in you and me,

Deep in the spirit's slums, the brain's recesses  
Something that might have made existence fair.  
Therefore Broadway to-day in harlots' dresses  
With raddled cheeks in our own eyes must stare.

We have no face of God, where God's creation  
Becomes an ulcered mask of steel and stone;  
And millions eat the manhood from the nation,  
Born of the beasts to live and die alone.

Millions of faces; failures, false, impurely  
Born of God's beasts; His sacramental sign  
Somewhere they bear obscurely still, and surely  
Their eyes shall look on love that lives divine.

*New York, 12, 10, '10.*

## THE BOHEMIAN

**B**OHEMIA, Bohemia, I'd gladly press his hand  
Who swore he'd rather dwell in thee than any  
other land.

I hail that other worthy too, his memory far too vague,  
Who sang thy goodly capital the wondrous city Prague.

Thy borders, dear Bohemia, are neither near nor far.  
Altruria and Arcady thy nearest neighbors are.  
Philistia is far away. Her evil company  
And Plutocrat and Pharisee are aliens to thee.

Thy landscape, fair Bohemia, is old yet ever new.  
The snow shall turn thy sordid roofs to Iceland's ermine  
hue.

Thy borderland twixt day and night with sparkling  
lights is set.

And moon and stars shall duly shine to make it fairer yet.

Thy poets poor, Bohemia, what pen can paint them well;  
Their loves and hates, their hopes and fears, despairs  
and triumphs tell;

Their hunger, cold and nakedness; each everlasting bill;  
The check that came at last by chance, a starving soul  
to fill?

Thy maidens, my Bohemia, are witty, wise and fair.  
We love them best in gowns well worn they well know  
how to wear.

They know good books and pictures too, good dinners,  
wines and men.

And therewithal they learn to make good wives and  
mothers when

They leave thee. Ah, Bohemia, thy boys and girls must go  
From thy dear confines through this world of want, un-  
faith and woe.

Bohemia, Bohemia, though money comes and fame;  
Who loves thee once, Bohemia, shall always bless thy  
name.

*New York, 7, 21, '99.*

## IV AMUSEMENT

### *THE FAN*

**L**AST night a high brow poet I'd life sentence to the pen,  
Remarked, "Now really, is base-ball a game for grown up men?"  
Says I, "My lad, it takes your like a thousand years or so  
To fit yourselves, the reason why it is just that to know."  
And that broke up the session. The girls all turned me down,  
The boy from Boston had them cinched. It's different there down town.  
When things get hot in summer, and trade's so hellish slow  
You go to sleep between times, and the girls and grafters go  
To Newport, Paris, Switzerland, the North Woods, Norway, Maine;  
And noise plays rag-time on your nerves, and sweat soaks through your brain;  
And the devil's on the job all night, and Mrs. Satan too;  
Those Giants swing Jehovah's fight. They help us to come through.

It's not all out of doors alone, nor yet the eternal boy.  
It's men and artists at their work, the fine creative joy  
That does one thing supremely well. Hans Wagner's at the bat,  
Matty is up against him. You don't know where you're at.



## THE FAN

---

Two men on bases, two men out, two runs will tie the score,  
The coon behind says "Shut yo' eyes." You hear a sudden roar.  
Devore has pulled it off the fence. The crowd has filled the field.—  
Yes you, who came with her to scoff at things still half revealed.

Grit, strength and speed; the seeing eye, the hand that holds, contrives;  
Obedience grim to orders, the fitness that survives  
From spring to fall through Summer's heat, however taxed and tried,  
That keeps its temper through defeat; its head that wins "inside."  
And I've my private vision of the heavenly city's streets  
Where the angels watch the score boards for our triumphs and defeats.  
And they crowd the sky's big bleachers. When you tally on the square  
They never miss a single play. And the Umpire's always fair.  
Thank God for pretty girls, and flowers; books, children, music, all  
That makes life worth the living — and — while life is left, base-ball.

*Bath Beach, 8, 14, '10.*

## THE STAR

**D**O you call us stars? We're sky signs. And you never will look higher.  
Over Broadway flickers fleeting, artificial, lurid fire.  
You have made the night a nightmare and a drunkard's frantic dream.  
You have hidden and forbidden beauty, vision, truth supreme.

## THE STAR

---

Here you imitate God's sunset, desecrate His rose of dawn.

Fifty thousand dollars did it. So the multitudes are drawn

To your cheap machine-made moonlight. Fifty million precious years

Wrought this planet's high perfection; pain and courage, love and tears:

While you make your plays of money, sentiment as thin and cheap

As your sickly shiver music, though your hearts beat strong and deep.

And you syndicate the shallow, idle, foolish, false and vain.

And you prostitute your playwright, buy and sell your critic's brain.

You are dull and drugged with labor, held by habit, dead, inert.

In an opium dreamer's Eden, girls across the footlights flirt.

Melodrama's moving pictures, bring no message to your mind,

And the soul you sell and sentence, sinks to sloth and sleep resigned.

And the world around you wakes and yearns. Your stage of life is set

With lust and love and doubt and fear and faith that you forget.

And your nation has to bleed and war with greed and graft and hate.

And your cities choke and stifle while you trifle with your fate.

You are summoned to life's court-room, in its jury-box to serve;

## THE STAR

---

(You are here to test the truth of things lest justice halt  
or swerve.)

To your theater of freedom, to the trial of high and low ;  
And you turn the people's forum to a children's puppet  
show.

And the winds of heaven murmur. And the midnight's  
million eyes

Look down in scorn; yet pity you, lost children of the  
skies,

For your poverty of spirit, that your millions shame and  
mar;

Like your mountebank and liar you ordain to be a star.  
*New York, 8, 14, '10.*

## THE MANAGER

**Y**OU'VE got to get your stuff across. These high  
brow playwrights come to me.

I know in twenty lines or so if they have got the stuff  
to show.

One in a hundred scores a hit, I take the play and make  
it though,

Since I'm my own stage manager. The star's an item  
too may be.

But when I can I cut them out. When I interpret words  
in things

You see and hear and have to feel, I like proportion in  
the cast.

That's my ideal; democracy. Though Shakespeare may  
be sure to last

He starred the grafters higher up. We've passed be-  
yond their posturings.

He wrote of common people too. The people's drama  
slowly grows

## THE MANAGER

---

From Broadway's mud and blare and blaze. The Jews  
have made the thing a trade.

Of nastiness and noise as well. And what they give you,  
you have made.

They are the creatures of their time. You share their  
sin the Devil knows.

Get busy now and think it out a little way. Your law-  
yer, priest,

Your doctor, druggist, engineer; before they practise on  
the crowd

You send to school, examine them. Here any savage  
is allowed

To bait his trap with filth and lies. Does this concern  
you? Not the least.

The rest are specialists you see. But us your wisdom  
lets alone,

The doctors of the mind and heart for all; the sweep-  
ings of the street,

The young, the old, the rich, the poor; you disregard.  
You make complete

The case against you, for you pay for our damnation  
and your own.

Turn backward. When the shamans stirred the offal  
for their brews of hell,

And fed the sick and mad with them the world looked  
on and went its way;

And grew beyond it. So shall we. We are your  
shamans here to-day,

Witch doctors for your savagery. In our barbaric way  
we tell,

The world is slowly climbing still. Now look at medi-  
cine. How long

Have antiseptics been in force? Your pure food law,  
how old is it?

## THE MANAGER

---

For anti-toxines of the soul to-morrow we may all be fit.  
And so I dream and drudge to make a drama true and  
fine and strong.

And little people; high brows, cranks and critics, call  
my product crime,  
Good Lord, I do the best I can with what I've got. But  
give me time.

*St. Malo, 7, 16, '11.*

## THE BROILERS

**W**HEN all the world were children; and worshipping  
the sun  
We danced before his altars, our craft was well begun.  
The breezes and the shadows they taught us secrets true.  
We told them to the cavemen, who clapped. And they  
were you.

To-day since you have taken the sunlight from our eyes,  
In streets that you have darkened where houses hide the  
skies,  
We dance beneath the limelight; we struggle for its rays.  
And you that see us give us our second's share of praise.

We are your spirit's sisters, the redness of your blood;  
Small sparks that shed their sunshine, then trampled in  
the mud  
Go down to death and darkness; but while we shine we  
bring  
New light to weary faces and teach dumb lips to sing.

We are the endless ballet that Lillith, Mother Eve,  
Began; and unborn babies shall relay by your leave.  
Like flowers and stars and seasons, to hide the endless  
chain  
That drags us on together, we bloom then fade again.

## THE BROILERS

---

We wilt beneath the lime-light; but you, you seek its glow,

You crowd around our altar new victims there to know.  
And Moloch and Astarte whose secrets we reveal  
Shall teach your hearts to-morrow to lie and lust and steal.

We are unhonored vestals; but quenchless gleams our light.

Our tribute flows unceasing, so long as in your sight  
We hold the stage's center; and then like her who fell  
In Rome, alive in darkness you bury us as well.

To-night with power hypnotic we lull the weary brain.  
We dazzle eyes that rest not until they dream again.  
You who pursue the limelight in wider worlds outside,  
Can you with scorn complacent depart well satisfied?

*Paris, 11, 7, '08.*

## THE CHORUS GIRL

**C**HORUS girls are human beings just the same as you.

Some are straight and some are crooked, some between the two.

Even managers are decent, sometimes; but you bet  
Take it by and large, we have to sweat for what we get.  
On the outside it looks easy, maybe. But it ain't.  
Sure, those pony ballet broilers very often faint.

There's one show that keeps a doctor always right at hand.

As for us three hours on end each night we have to stand.

We look cool behind the footlights smiling blissfully.  
The curtain falls. You take a drink. Say, kid, you ought to see

## THE CHORUS GIRL

---

How we simply have to hustle up two flights of stairs.  
Every girl with three or four more half a mirror shares  
In a dressing room that would disgrace a Harlem flat.  
Gee, the air gets thick. Some curse of course. A cat's  
a cat.

When you want things most they're missing. Then you  
have to pay.

You get used to naked souls and bodies. That's the way  
We drag down our eighteen per. That's all on Broad-  
way. Well,

When you're out upon the road it's simply moving hell.  
Trains are late and meals are missed, hotel rooms full  
or cold.

Yet you know that you're damn lucky if your schedules  
hold,

And you don't get stranded out in Oshkosh or Podunk.  
There are fools who lose their money, others who get  
drunk,

And the common every day ones, drifting to the bad.  
If you're white and want to help, it's like to drive you  
mad.

Now and then though, other days you're glad you're  
living. Say,

Do you really think this life of ours is merely play?  
One in ten plugs on for years and maybe gets her  
chance.

Maybe she makes good. The rest who simply sing and  
dance,

Stand for mash notes, midnight suppers—Mighty few's  
enough.—

Talk of marriage if you've money. Watch us call your  
bluff.

*Brookfield, N. S., 7, 20, '10.*

## THE BILL TOPPER ABROAD

WELL, I cut out their old chateau.  
Napoleon quit at Fontainebleau.  
That day I abdicated care.  
I know a hillside near the *gâre*.  
And long I lay and dreamed that day  
Of Coney and of Rockaway.

I didn't seem to miss the crowd.  
The wind came up, now soft, now loud,  
Like breaking surf. Across the sky  
It shifted scenes. I sent my eye  
Through two tall pine trees, to the blue;  
And clouds like powder, sprinkled too  
On Mother Nature's smiling face.

Well, it was good to leave the race  
And noise of Paris; just to rest.  
I felt my hands by mosses pressed.  
(No softer kisses girls can give.)  
And there once more I learned to live.

Next day on the Alhambra's stage  
I topped the bill. I'm still the rage.  
But better magic than I learned  
From Kellar and the rest returned  
At times; to make me mighty sure  
That things eternal still endure  
Behind the tricks we sinners show.

In night's dark cabinet I know  
The devil seemed to shut your friend.  
Believe me, lad, that's not the end.  
You'll see him yet through years obscure.  
Life told me so at Fontainebleau.

*Fontainebleau, 6, 18, '11.*



## THE PLAYWRIGHT

I GOT hung up at Angers. They call the place An-J.  
And a Yankee at the station said, "My friend, the  
only way

To put in your eighty minutes here is to see that tapes-  
try

Hung round the whole cathedral. It sure beats Bar-  
num's. Gee!

They've got all Revelations there." I took him at his  
word

Not that I'm long on churches. But this is what oc-  
curred.

I saw their old Apocalypse, each hydra-headed beast,  
Death on his pale horse and the rest. And then a little  
priest

Who tried to talk United States said "This is fine, *mon*  
*cher,*

Take it from me, though, old St. Serge is sure some  
church for fair.

"It's handy by the *gâre* besides." I drifted down that  
way.

I found a whole French funeral there. I stayed to hear  
them pray.

You know the way those Latin chants go rolling soft  
and low

Like breaking waves, or running streams or eddies cool  
and slow.

I listened and I saw the high clerestory's lines of light  
And marble white, enduring as the plays I've got to  
write.

It seemed a well where light and sound and life itself  
were one.

Well, somehow I got out my watch. Great Scott, I had  
to run!

## THE PLAYWRIGHT

---

*Believe me, friend, we've got to get religion back again  
Before our plays are fit for beans; our women fit for  
men.*

Here's France that's out to flay the church. The church  
here holds its own.

Lord, what a play I'd make of that if I were let alone,  
And guaranteed production. Our religion and our plays,  
We take them both too easy, son. They tell you now-  
a-days.

The stage must take the pulpit's place. It will when we  
get through

Turning out trash for imbeciles. That's maybe me and  
you.

That happy ending's half the truth. We like what's  
new or old,

That stirs us. When those mourners knelt I blame near  
joined the fold.

It's a long, long way from Wall Street to that church in  
old Angers.

But stage my modern martyrdom, I'll hypnotize Broad-  
way.

*Angers, 8, 7, '11.*

## THE DEBUTANTE

**Y**OU girl in the glass you are eighteen to-day,  
And your life's going to be one great glorious  
play.

Your lessons like litanies over and done,  
You are out of your shell, the cocoon that they spun.  
You're no longer a nun in your cloister of doubt.  
And it's going to be fun, for you're going to find out.

You are going to find out what is better than books,  
What is older than English, the language of looks.  
You are going to learn what the world thinks of you,  
Not your class, not your clothes: when it's looking you  
through;

## THE DEBUTANTE

---

When the women are cats, and the men mostly brutes,  
And their eyes seek your essence; dig down to the roots.

And which faces are trumps you will try and you'll test.  
You'll play better than Bridge. And you'll play with  
the best.

All your life you've been learning the rules of the game.  
Now you'll practice the tricks till you're sure of the  
same,

Till you're tired of trifling; and, mistress of arts  
A man meets your fancy and both make it hearts.

Then you're going to learn all the language of lies:  
And your clothes and your smiles are its words to the  
wise;

Like the chocolates and orchids and pearls, men present  
To the women they buy. But you're sure to resent  
What they say, till you're sorry and cruel. My dear,  
You are going to be horrid and hateful I fear;

Though the lies are the letters that spell out the truth,  
For your eyes are the eyes of inviolate youth  
As they gaze from the glass. You're the image to me  
Of your mother's own daughter. And there you shall  
see

Your daughter's own mother, and grow to forgive  
Each soul at her mirror that's learning to live.

*New York, 5, 22, '11.*

## MOVING PICTURES

**T**HERE'S class to ours, believe me. You get your  
vaudeville,  
Two turns in five, most any night when the seats begin  
to fill  
With tired people. Out of sweat shops, lofts and stores  
they come;

## MOVING PICTURES

---

From offices and tenements. And some are smiling,  
some  
With hard luck stories on their maps, until they step in-  
side  
And I start to reel off "Baby's Bath" or else "The  
Cowboy's Bride."

Now when I was a kid I used to read the 'Rabian  
Nights,  
There was a flying carpet there. We've got that cinched  
to rights.  
You sit down here and shut your eyes. You open them.  
Straightway  
You're in Pekin or Panama, or Rome or Mandalay.  
You can beat it out to Zanzibar as soon as Hackensack,  
And the customs sharks can't hold you up for the things  
that you bring back.

There was a certain caliph too who'd rubber round his  
town,  
To watch the guys who played it straight, and turn the  
grafters down.  
He hadn't nothing on us here, with Little Italy,  
Hell's Kitchen and the Horse Show Bunch, the Plaza  
taking tea,  
The Broad Street brokers on the curb, the Bowery, Luna  
Park,  
Base-ball and air-ships, battleships and Broadway after  
dark.

It's sure some town. But pipe this though. Those  
farmers in Japan,  
Who wear the smiles that won't come off. Somehow it  
makes a man  
Say "What's the answer? Do we win, or have they got  
a cinch?"  
We buy our joy with watered stock or sweat. They  
scrape and pinch.

## MOVING PICTURES

---

They've got their moving pictures though. They size  
up you and me,  
For foreign freaks half civilized, like we do them, may-  
be.

I guess the whole world's growing wiser. Say, it's not  
so slow  
When everywhere you go you find a Moving Picture  
Show.  
We're a speeding up creation. It's curiosity  
Not love, that makes the world go round. You can take  
it straight from me  
What the high brows call the Vision, we are setting  
forth for fools.  
And we're making Moving Picture Shows the people's  
Public Schools!

*Paris, 6, 20, '11.*

## CONEY ISLAND

**T**HERE'S little enough that a lady can do on sim-  
ply six dollars a week.  
My map isn't one that most lobsters pursue but I don't  
look a lot like a freak.  
And my chum is like me though her hair is some red.  
And so every Sunday or so  
As soon as we manage to crawl out of bed together to  
Coney we go.

We lie on the sand and we splash in the wet with a mil-  
lion beside, maybe more.  
And we wipe off the slate; and the troubles forget that  
are gone, or that wait on the shore.  
And when every last floor walker devil seems dim be-  
side pop-corn and peanuts and gum,  
We drift down to Luna and get in the swim. And be-  
lieve me we're soon going some.

## CONEY ISLAND

---

For the dance-hall we're strong, though we waltz by ourselves. There's the air-ships, the wheel in the skies, There's the joint where the Jap keeps his stock on the shelves till the little ball rolls for a prize. There's those lovely gondolas. And when we are flush just you watch my friend Minnie and me For the camels and elephants making a rush. On them we're in India. See?

With its fireworks and lanterns and searchlights and fun, every night is a Fourth of July. And as soon as your works to run down have begun, you just watch the crowd drifting by. You sit on a bench and it sure does you good to see all the others get glad, You would start in again if you'd cash and you could. Since you can't you've no call to be sad.

Now this looping the loop, and this shooting the chutes ain't no stunts just for lunatics made, With a thrill and a spill maybe. Down to the roots of our nature they strike and we're swayed By something that gets at the soldier and swell when they're out for excitement, and so, Since we can't climb the Alps and play polo as well; to Coney and Luna we go.

And the old roller coaster's a motor for me. And the Ticklers and Barrels of Love They sift off your sorrows until you are free from care; and they lift you above The grind and the grime and the sag in the air of the shops where we're standing all day. They tell you that labor's a prayer. Over there I know that I pray while I play,

## CONEY ISLAND

---

For the men that have made of amusement a mill. You  
drop your ten cents in the slot,  
And you get in the game. And you just can't keep still  
until good and plenty you've got.  
They say that our life in New York's a machine. If it  
is, we've its antidote here.  
There are better things maybe. I know what I've seen.  
I'm for Coney forever, my dear.

*Paris, 6, 23, '11.*

## V ALTRUISTS

### THE PLAYGROUND WORKER

**O**H, I want to make them happy, all the children of  
the street,  
And I long to stoop and clasp them close and rest their  
restless feet;  
Kiss their tearful little faces; light their little loveless  
eyes;  
Into dark and shameful places bring a baby's Paradise!  
  
Bring them woman's dear devotion, mother-love they never  
knew,  
Memories we make immortal all a lifetime's journey  
through;  
Strong to save the soul that struggles, echoing the spirit's  
prayer  
Inarticulate, till triumph crowns its terror and despair.  
  
Summer comes and meadows blossom, rivers ripple,  
thrushes sing;  
Children here of want and hunger never know the song  
of Spring.

## THE PLAYGROUND WORKER

---

Sunrise flames through clouds of glory; mountains, seas  
and forests call  
Half the city. Here the children cheated, smile, and  
miss them all.

Summer comes and in its furnace shrinking like their  
strip of shade,  
They grow pale and frail and fretful; and they faint  
where once they played,  
Crawling gladly in the gutters, childish treasures clutch-  
ing tight;  
Bits of pasteboard, bones and buttons, and a doll's de-  
formed delight.

Summer comes and empty houses round the Park in  
thousands stand,  
Boarded doors and eyeless windows, sealed to mother  
love's demand,  
Like the lives of childish women, spirits barren, weak  
and blind,  
Who desert their homes for shadows, leaving emptiness  
behind.

They are children like the others, loveless in a world of  
light.  
And their souls that seek the shadows languish pale and  
dim of sight,  
Crawling in the stagnant gutters of life's garden choked  
with stones;  
Clutching tight their childish treasures, bits of paste-  
board, rags and bones.



## THE PRIEST

**S**HE has gone alone into the darkness  
Like a flower the wind of death has taken.  
Easter dawns, the rose of morn unfolding,  
Filling all the earth with April sweetness;  
Springtime's sacrament of resurrection;  
Here the outward sign, but where the Presence?

She is gone alone. Alone she left me.  
She is gone. It may be I shall see her  
High enthroned in Heaven like Beatrice  
If a Heaven there be in the Hereafter.

No one of us knows. From mortal weakness  
We have made ourselves our own Madonnas.  
Flaming through the midnight, saints and martyrs  
Flickered out. Their lovers left behind them  
For their own hearts' healing, out of pity,  
Learned the story of a loving Father;  
Changeless, strong, omniscient and eternal;  
Taught the miracle of Love's redemption  
In the human form the heart cries out for.

No one knows and science slowly marshals  
Planets, suns and systems in their courses,  
Sees the germ, the man, the star, together  
Links in one long chain of evolution  
Fixed by law, and changeless, soulless, endless.

No one of us knows that God omniscient,  
He who kindles stars and spares His sparrows.  
This alone remains. Be brave and tender;  
Teach the blind the Vision of the ages:  
Though you perish then your seed shall blossom.  
*Ah, but if these eyes should wake and find her!*  
New York, 10, 19, '10.

## THE BRIDE

**H**E'S sleeping still. He was so near last night.  
Has it been ten whole weeks? And can he be  
Now in another world? Perhaps of me  
He dreams. He smiles; a ripple passing light  
O'er depths unfathomed through eternity.

I am alone so soon; myself so strange,  
And he, and all the world that half I fear.  
My dreams are wearing thin. My eyes are clear.  
And he must change as I and all things change  
However dear. Last night we were so near.

Asleep, his face is strong and kind and true.  
They say that test is sure. It serves to-day.  
But in the years that seem so far away,  
That come so soon; how shall the soul show through  
That changing mask of worn and mortal clay?

Shall I be sure to keep his honor clean  
A shield unspotted for us both, and all  
Who trust him as I must whate'er befall?  
Shall I be strong that he on me may lean  
Wounded and weary, answer when I call?

Shall I be patient till his children see  
In him their pattern; till he holds success  
Only a tool that helps us to express  
The love, the cares, the prayers he shares with me?  
Shall I be fair when they their faults confess?

Can I be wise my arms to open wide,  
To take them to my heart who do not know  
What I have learned in this last hour or so;  
That dreams are dead without some soul inside  
That out of pain impels our love to grow?

*Bideford, 8, 29, '11.*

## THE HEAD WORKER

**H**ERE in our blockhouse of the common good  
Against barbarity, our settlement  
On man's last grim frontier; our pioneer  
Who made his clearing, hewed out parks and play-  
grounds;  
Let in the light where light had never been  
Through the slum's jungles; to a hundred mothers  
Tells of his Danish boyhood, of the clock  
Made in America whose restless ticking  
Called him across to us. He came and found  
Red men and black, from all the tribes of earth  
In greed and grime, bloodshed and slime combined  
To conquer light yet live.

Alone he fought them,  
Blazed his long trail to better things. At last  
The world stood on his side. We tore them down  
The black Bastiles of death; the tenements  
Of treason and decay. Their shadow still  
Remains. This pale young widow feels its weight,  
Waking and wondering at Leather Stocking,  
Uncas, Chingachgook, all the forest rangers  
Who woke adventure in our Viking's youth  
And broke this tyranny.

And she shall bear  
Vikings, and freemen's mothers who shall humble  
Manhattan's savage heart; the lust of blood  
That money breeds in men. Here in the shelter  
Of this last New World block house shall they live.  
And learn to share their treasure, till the world  
Unseals its darkest dungeons of despair  
And sets its captives free.

The clock ticks on  
Here in the hall. The lights go out till morning.  
*Surely each second brings that daybreak nearer.*

*New York, 1, 18, '11.*

## THE NURSE

**C**HILDREN! They're all like that to me,  
Both young and old and sick and well.  
There was a man once. Well, you see  
He sailed away. And none can tell  
Where his ship sank, till Judgment day.  
Then I woke up, I cast away

The girl in me. I came to life.  
I saw a world of want and pain.  
I saw the surgeons use the knife,  
Heard secrets grim of soul and brain  
Flow forth on fever's restless waves.  
I heard the dying dig their graves.

I opened doors for mother love;  
Let in new life; new voices heard.  
They might have been mine once. Above  
I look for them. The Holy Word  
That hour by hour, by day and night  
The prisoners of pain recite:

In endless litanies I hear.  
My soul bows down, however weak  
However marred by shame and fear  
The faces seem. I learn to seek  
The life divine below the mask.  
This is my triumph and my task.

They all are children. Work and play  
Their faces soil. I make them clean  
And whole and vital; day by day  
The happiness that life must mean  
Comes back and makes them dear and true.  
And so I grow more happy too.

*Bideford, 7, 17, '11.*

## THE SISTER

**S**HE'S all I have and she's going to hell.  
Broadway is booked for her finish, I guess.  
Say, it's a lie about blood's bound to tell.  
Hats mean a lot to her. I'm something less.  
When the Devil says "Dearest," she'll sure answer  
"Yes."

We're in the chorus. I hate it all too.  
Some of them smile when they call me the saint.  
I'm at the back. It's the best I can do.  
She's down in front, at the end, with the paint  
Red on her face like a fever's hot taint.

Only eighteen and she thinks it is great.  
I'm twenty-one. I can still understand  
How the lights dazzled her down from up state.  
Two years ago, we were home, hand in hand.  
Now I might live in the last foreign land.

Sometimes it's hard to be square with the rest.  
Folks come to me with their troubles in tow.  
Say, but it's Hell to be doing your best,  
Knowing that some day she's going to go.  
Sooner or later it's bound to be so.

*Bideford, 7, 31, '11.*

## THE LOVER

**O**UT of darkness into daylight, round the good old  
earth is turning.  
Out of dreams and desolation all the city wakes to-day.  
And a world of happy lovers all the heart of life are  
learning,  
They shall see her, they shall hear her, they shall hold  
her while they may.

## THE LOVER

---

Broadway smiles to meet the morning, all its million  
windows shining,  
Multitudes of eyes that open wide to watch the greatest  
game  
That is played in earth or heaven, like a crowd a grand-  
stand lining.  
Yesterday I never knew it, though this body was the  
same.

I was cold with calculation; I was blinded like the  
others  
By the dust that drifts for ever round the foot-ball of  
success.  
Now I know the croon of children and the call of nest-  
ing mothers;  
All the secret of creation; though she never answers yes.

For the sight of her was singing, and her voice had  
power to waken  
Something stifled, half forgotten, in the golden days  
when youth  
Was a sword of faith untarnished. And the fallen and  
forsaken  
Were the clue that led me to her through the labyrinth  
wide of truth.

For I found her in a sick room in a tenement. She  
filled it  
With her loveliness. And children watched in wonder  
while she smiled  
Lifting little hands in worship. And she caught my  
heart and thrilled it.  
And I woke and stood and watched her, half a woman,  
half a child.

On our way up town she told me, sorrow's sacred side  
revealing,

## THE LOVER

---

Girlish dreams and aspirations, and a child's divine delight  
In the good that goes to meet her. And my spirit lowly kneeling  
Watched my weapons at her altar while I lay awake all night.

To the order of Compassion, to the knighthood white of Duty  
I was signed and sealed at daybreak, with the earth my table round;  
While I watched the shadows waver. And the bright immortal beauty  
Of the starlight was the symbol of the service I had found.

*Bideford, 8, 1, '11.*

## THE LUNGER

**H**ELL'S being up against it when you haven't got the goods,  
And someone's due to fill the bill. I struck this neck of woods  
A shaking bag of bones and skin outside a strangling soul.  
The mountains and the sunlight they helped to make me whole.  
What else? A girl? Not on your life! This kid here did the rest.  
His mother had a dozen more. She loved her cripple best.  
He helped to watch the babies. He helped me watch and wait.  
I sent him to the hospital. To-day he's walking straight.  
Back in New York I tore it off — three millions ripped away  
Out of the hands of men like me, too blind to see the day.

## THE LUNGER

---

I've done with their skyscrapers, man. It's mountains  
now for me,  
I turn this flat stone over so. And suddenly you see  
A bunch of beetles running blind. The sunlight drives  
them wild.  
The light of truth did that to me. And then a little  
child  
Reached out his hand. I gripped it hard, and I began  
to blink.  
The game that gets you drops you quick. You've hell's  
own time to think.  
I had it here for half a year. I simply had to lie,  
And wonder what in heaven or earth my money'd ever  
buy.  
I'd watch the clouds, I'd count the stars, till something  
made it plain  
Man isn't made to die alone or live alone in pain.

That's what we manufacture there with Wall Street and  
the rest.  
But joy's a kind of hardy crop that flourishes out West.  
Hell's being blind to all the trails that lead to freedom.  
So  
Between the mountains and the stars I'm helping men to  
grow.  
My money helps to get them here. I'm learning hon-  
or's names,  
Instead of stocks; the men that heal Manhattan's sins  
and shames.  
It's just as if a surgeon's hand down in some spirit's  
slum  
Had cut my rotting tumor out, (to show me Kingdom  
Come)  
That's money for itself alone. Believe me, son; to live  
It's not enough to earn, to own, to steal; you've got to  
give.

*New York, 5, 17, '11.*



## THE SCHOOL TEACHER

**N**EAR three-quarter of a million, fifty thousand on  
part time,  
Average classes fully fifty; that's the black collective  
crime  
Crowds your schools, and crowds your prisons; crowds  
your cities, lifetimes too.  
We can teach the life you lend us, but the rest remains  
for you.

We can give them books and lunches, disinfect and san-  
itate;  
Strengthen starving souls and bodies, sometimes, when  
it's not too late;  
Educate the brute within them, toward the Vision we  
adore,  
Only five days out of seven, six hours in the twenty-  
four.

They are little human atoms sifting through our swift  
machine.  
We have little time to stamp them with the things that  
life should mean.  
They are crowded from our hands, and from their  
mothers' hearts as well;  
Crowded from infected homes and into streets like sew-  
ers of hell;

Crowded out of light and air and likeness to all vital  
things;  
Flowers and all that makes life fair, and shapes that  
spread the spirit's wings.  
Window boxes, birds in cages, gold-fish in a shallow  
bowl,  
Make our message of the ages to the city's infant soul.  
Freedom of the hills and skies, the mysteries of woods  
and waves,

## THE SCHOOL TEACHER

---

You have hidden from their eyes who make them traffic's weary slaves.

We can teach them how to add and multiply the hosts of greed;

Teach them singing who were sad a moment though our own hearts bleed.

For the cruel swift machine that mars them, mangles you and us;

Thrusts them out to lives unclean; and shuttles, fast, iniquitous.

They are patterns of to-morrow in your image more and more;

Little shapes of shame and sorrow you must pay and suffer for.

Pander, prostitute and thief and murderer in embryo;  
We who lend them brief relief, yearly see them come and go.

You are children like the rest, the infant class of greed and doubt;

From the homes by heaven blessed, and life's true schooling crowded out.

*New York, 7, 25, '11.*

## THE WARDEN

**O**NE thing there is my life has proved. Be sure you get my meaning clear.

Resultants of ten thousand forces focussed in the heart and head;

I've neither bad nor good, nor strong, nor weak, nor wise, nor foolish here.

Each man's a Cosmos in himself that's always changing till he's dead.

Here in this world we make our laws by rule of thumb.  
Our justice still

## THE WARDEN

---

As arbitrary as the way we learn to spell, to-day remains.

We cage the children of the slums since nature taught their hands to kill.

They prove their fitness to survive, not ours who kept their lives in chains.

For in so far as prisons are the homes of pain and punishment,

We punish and we fine ourselves. For criminal neglect we pay;

For civic imbecility; for blind, ignoble, brute content With medieval savagery. At last we learn a better way.

That dark cell was the type of all, the old time prison of the race,

Where all the powers of darkness lay in ambush for the fettered soul.

To-day we may let in the light. We have devised new means of grace

My prison is a hospital. I make the crippled spirit whole.

For sickness, ignorance and sin are one. I'm no psychologist;

Experience has taught me this. And common sense has made me trust

The good that grows in every man. You suffer evil to exist

Through black suggestion; bolts and bars, and penalties and pains unjust.

I have appealed to better things. At noon or night unarmed I go

Through my three thousand convicts here. Though some are tigers, others keep

Their watch for me. I set them free to fight a fire. I find them so

## THE WARDEN

---

Heroic, willing, faithful hearts that you through doubt  
have drugged to sleep.

To-day your surgeons cut away the sunken bone that  
numbs the brain.

You hail a modern miracle when memory and speech re-  
turn.

I take the pressure from men's souls, the load of bitter-  
ness and pain.

And may they not remember love, and words that live  
forever, learn?

*Bideford, 7, 20, '11.*

## VI SUCCESSES

### THE QUARTER MILER

**G**ET on your marks! Get set! You're out to  
beat the pistol. So

Your trainer taught the trick. You're off. A yard in  
front you show.

They catch you at the turn. They lead you. Now one  
front goes down.

You hurdle him. You hold the pace. The little lad  
from Brown

Is setting a two-twenty clip. You feel the cinders fly  
Against your shins. You see the back stretch shifting  
swiftly by.

You glue your eyes to a number seven some one pinned  
askew,

On a big blue back two feet away. Now Yale is com-  
ing through.

You move up slowly stroke by stroke as tandem cyclists  
ride.

You're in the stretch. You're at his side. You hold  
him stride for stride.

## THE QUARTER MILER

---

You feel the track is climbing stairs. Your coach yells  
"Keep your feet."  
The thin red line is closer now. You know you can't  
be beat.  
You seem to touch the tape together. You hear one  
thundering shout  
Of "Harvard! Harvard! Harvard! Harvard!"  
Then you're down and out.  
That's what it means; one moment, lad, of life sublime,  
supreme.  
It's better, harder, bigger too, than all you hope or dream.  
You come to life; get on your clothes. The track's a  
trifle slow,  
Your time was only forty-nine. You watch the team  
win though.  
You get your first good cigarette, and someone leads  
you to  
A grand stand full of gorgeous girls; and one demands  
of you  
"What's training like?" and suddenly the whole of it  
comes back;  
The grind that made you what you are, the plodding  
round the track,  
Cross country runs in cold and rain and wind that met  
you square  
As any stone wall rush line; plays, dinners and dances  
where  
They didn't miss you much or did; and nights you spent  
alone  
And the Devil whispered "What's the use?" and Bos-  
ton's lights were thrown  
Across the page in front of you that you could hardly  
see.  
All this was thirty years ago. It made a man of me.  
It helped to make you what you are, my son. And now  
you bet  
Our blood is bound to win. Wade in. You'll break that  
record yet.

Paris, 6, 17, '11.

## THE POWER SMITH

**D**OGMA and doubt are dying to-day.  
Science has dawned like a radiant sun.  
And the mists and the shadows steal away  
From the mind of man. And the light shall run  
O'er the map of space and the plan divine.  
In the temple of error's vault malign,

In the labyrinth dim of the human brain,  
In the cavern of error, doubt and fear;  
The powers of darkness clutch in vain  
One veil of the Grail. And our goal is here.  
"Look on the face of thy God and die,"  
Pontiff and sophist vainly cry.

Look on the face of thy God and live,  
Is the watch-word of the world to-day.  
Failure alone He can not forgive  
Who weighs His stars like our human clay;  
Who His search-lights lifts like His comets' flight,  
To startle interstellar night.

Millions of martyrs fed the flame  
That science dissects. And the earth rolls on.  
Out of this pin-point planet came  
The vision of space. So is Babylon  
Less than New York, though fools to-day  
To a truth as dead as a mummy pray.

Naked and lovely she lives; and dear  
As her voice that echoes immortal song,  
To the poet and the pioneer  
Who with her worshippers belong:  
We who our homage to all avow  
Who go before and who show us how.

*New York, 2, 6, '11.*

## BUSINESS

**B**USINESS is hell and we're finding it out;  
Hogs at a feeding trough, wolves in a pack.  
Year after year here we struggle and shout.  
And the strong men do murder, the others get back,  
At the sick and the weak and the last in the rout.

Lambs loose their fleeces, and cattle stampede.  
Bears get their grip; every morning and night.  
Hustle and crush towards a seat— You succeed—  
Read what the newspapers say of the fight;  
Subways held up while the millions we bleed.

Business is war. If you fight for your own  
Herd with the mob; you'll go down in the dust,  
Lucky at last if you're buried alone.  
Better turn traitor and stand with the trust,  
March with your masters to morrows unknown.

Business is system, the monster machine;  
Caesar's last legions, the triumphs of trade;  
Women and children its captives obscene,  
Factory slaves of an empire new made;  
Holding the balance the oceans between.

Business is science that sifts and divides;  
Viscerates earth, and festoons it with steel;  
Harvests the desert, and tramples the tides;  
Openings new bids its lenses reveal;  
Faster and faster to mastery rides.

Business is life that abhors the unfit;  
Man's big battalions that solid and slow  
Sweep up the wreck; and eternally go  
Forth to the stars from the mirk of the pit;  
Winning their way. You can struggle or quit.

*New York, 7, 16, '10.*

## THE FIRST-BORN

OUT of the void and the essence of things, out of the  
tumult and midnight of matter,  
I have achieved; and my soul in me sings. And the ed-  
dies of silence that living things shatter,  
Have loosened their hold and have let me go free. And  
once more I have opened my eyes to the light.  
I have opened my heart. And I hear, and I see, and I  
live in the love that was born of the night.

He is so wonderful, soft, and so small, and so warm and  
so dear, and so vital and tender;  
Part of the past, and the present, and all of the future  
that holds me with fingers so slender;  
Slight as the breath that he draws, and as strong as the  
pulses that battled and throbbed through my veins,  
Like the breath that a diver eternities long must hold,  
till it seems that he swoons in his pains.

Out of the darkness and out of the deep where I sank  
like a stone have I struggled and raised him.  
And there he lies perfect and fair and asleep. And doc-  
tors and nurses and everyone praised him.  
I have given him life, the brute limit of pain, with only  
the first of my warfare begun.  
I must give him the best of my heart and my brain to  
make him in spirit forever my son.

We were one. All the legions of error and grief are  
leagued, our communion to weaken and sever.  
Each day has its danger. Each night is a thief that  
little by little is stealing forever  
His helplessness sweet. When he grows, when he  
stands, when he holds all the world and its wealth  
at his feet;  
Oh, flesh of my flesh, there is strength in these hands  
to cling till our souls like our bodies shall meet.

*Paris, 6, 21, '11.*



## THE MOTHER

O H, I was glad the day he came and said  
"We have lost all." I smiled and told him "No,  
Not you nor me, nor either of these children  
That need us, all of us; nor faith, nor hope."  
I had a little money of my own,  
And the old house and garden where he met me.

So we went home, to our real home at last.  
Now we've been here two years. This spring we rented  
Six acres more next door for runs and houses.  
We've paid our way and better. I have time  
For flowers besides. We read the Sunday papers  
And once a week wake up to worlds outside us.

As for the worlds within, we read aloud.  
He never met a Poet on the Street  
Nor I at Bridge.— Yes, it was hard at first.  
I've nursed those chickens, watched those incubators  
Like my own babies; walked the floor with them  
Almost. To-day our servants are our partners.

It ought to be so. Still I cook and sew.  
I love it when it's done for those I love.  
I'm jealous of the things they wear and eat,  
When others handle them; each needle stroke  
Is a caress, a prayer, a pledge of faith.  
You smiled. Child wife, and mother try and see.

What do you know of life that savage children  
Who buy their motor toys, their frocks for dolls,  
With unearned increment that life's bad boys  
Filch from the folks that really live; can't tell you?  
Dear, since you are a child I have to love you,  
Like my sweet-peas faint-fragrant. Shall we see them?

*Maidenhead, 8, 27, '11.*

## THE GRANDMOTHER

**M**Y dear;  
I see you slowly blossom year by year,  
While wistful lips and eyes half wakened say  
"In all the world that waits for me to-day  
There is not anything to doubt or fear."

I held you like your mother in my arms;  
So soft, so small, so helpless. Life's alarms  
Broke on my mother love's strong citadel  
Like fog or smoke, and vanished. All was well.  
I held you safe from all that thwarts and harms.

I made your heart a home for cloistered nuns,  
For lovely thoughts; I who gave birth to sons,  
And shared their battles. So your home may be  
Fortress and shrine at once. Unsparingly  
I gave my substance as the river runs.

So have I lived nor failed. And now to you  
I hand life's torch and tell you "Child, be true."  
Out of my body I have made you fair.  
Out of my wisdom, this with you I share:  
That is the utmost that we women do.

For men must toil and wrestle, strive and slay.  
We show them love that laughing, learns to pray.  
They build their hopes and houses. Long unease  
Earns them the knowledge of all lands and seas.  
We make them music at the end of day.

You are my voice and heaven's; true and clear,  
When I am gone, sing on. The world shall hear.  
Till your strong love has stilled each travail throe,  
Till your true lips a grandchild's kisses know;  
Always be kind to everyone, my dear.

*New York, 8, 10, '10.*

## THE BETROTHED

**I**T'S too perfect long to last.  
Out of dreams we dreamers wake.  
Cloudless skies too clear and blue  
Turn to gray, and blacken too.  
Shadows beckon. For his sake  
Teach me how to hold him fast.

Teach me how to mother pain  
Twin to joy, and so to grow.  
Beauty, youth, that millions waste  
Life's faint letters fast erased;  
Teach me all their truth to know,  
Though they go their soul to gain.

Teach me how to hold him high.  
Teach me how to find him true,  
Day by day and year by year;  
Like myself, and far more dear;  
How to give him half his due,  
Children love shall sanctify.

Teach me how to mother all;  
Not to love my own alone.  
So a mother that caressed  
One alone, could cheat the rest.  
She who mother love has known  
Truly, shares with great and small:

All that men and time have wrought;  
All that makes this old world fair,  
All that makes its lovers strong;  
Joy and beauty, art and song;  
Pleasure, pity, pain and prayer;  
Tenderness and truth and thought.

*New York, 5, 1, '11.*

*THE FLOWER STAND MAN*

**B**UY my roses here below the Elevated's roar?  
Think my prices steep? My friend, it's graft  
you're paying for.

Every week the Sheeny sergeant gets his dirty bill.  
If I don't give up to him that Greek down yonder will.  
Say, it's fierce to find these foreigners corrupting us.  
Give your girl her rake off. Be a sport! Don't stand  
and fuss.

Gold-eyed daisies fresh with dew from green fields far  
away,

Three bunches for a quarter,—what's that for you to  
pay?

Little fading foam bells on the city's troubled sea.  
Sure you're welcome to them, kid. There's a girl be-  
longs to me,

With her eyes the self-same color, like those violets over  
there.

No, I never sell bride roses. They love another air.

These red American beauties that Broadway makes her  
own

Like rubies on a harlot's breast; I can count on them  
alone

To pay my rent and board bill, and to put a little by  
In case the kid should need it; though I don't intend to  
die

Till she's her own. Her mother did the day that she  
was born.

Maybe we both were lucky. Now I've little time to  
mourn.

And New York is hell for women. You can bet your  
bottom cent,

When Rose is in her teens we'll hike across the con-  
tinent

If we have to go that far, to find God's country unde-  
filed;

## THE FLOWER STAND MAN

---

Where the violets greet you from the grass with eyes  
just like a child;  
Where Broadway's phoney diamonds and sky-signs fade  
away;  
And a little taste of Heaven may be yours most any  
day.

And there we'll raise bride roses and pansies and sweet-  
peas,  
Till I find them in her face as well; and add to them  
heart's-ease.  
They may be scarce as mother's love, like mine was, on  
Broadway.  
But those dear old-fashioned flowers, friend, have some-  
where come to stay.  
One wants to buy the beauties. If your roll's too small  
you chafe;  
You're right, though. Take the violets. They're safe,  
my son. They're safe.

*New York, 6, 7, '10.*

## WALL STREET

**W**HY do I live on the twentieth story? Is it the  
view you get there?  
No, though it's worth all the rent if you've time for it.  
I must have light and air.  
Down below surges and festers the multitude, millions  
fore-damned to the pit,  
Half of them sinking and shrinking from hell; sick, in-  
efficient, unfit.  
Is it my fault that the quick-sands are hungry? Here  
have we planted our piles,  
Clusters that lift and allow you your leverage, over the  
treacherous miles  
Where the houses are traps, and murder and vice and  
the greed of the millions to-day

## WALL STREET

---

Grimly besieging our skyscraper watch-towers, kill and defile and betray.

Some one must rule, and since fools by majorities treason and rapine decree,

Taking their chances and wasting their heritage, why should you charge it to me?

I merely deal with your human material, such as it is. And I am

Super-humanity paying its dividends; avarice, lawlessness, sham;

Recklessness, mortgaging freely to-morrow, so long as to-day pays its way.

You have elected me. From you I borrow the sinews of war while I may.

Out of the chaos of modern endeavor, an empire of privilege and graft

I have erected with greed for a lever, matching brute cunning with craft;

Saved you from anarchy; therefore you curse me. I murder your weaklings that you,

Freed from their weight may go faster and further to goals our machines must pursue.

Steam, electricity, motors and radium, million-fold power expand.

We must race on. Some one leaps to the levers. His fitness of eye and of hand

Crushes a few, in your way; but the many he saves from disaster more dark.

Would we drive harmlessly, slowly? We could. But you keep advancing the spark.

Such as we are we remain while your haste and your savagery we represent.

Lincoln said truly, the people deserve and they get too the same government.

## WALL STREET

---

If you don't like it, the game's in your hands. Our newspapers feed you with lies,  
If you want truth you shall have it. But first revise what you all advertise.  
If you want justice and millions as well, you'll go on where our tools show the way,  
Trying to trim between heaven and hell, and knowing that some one must pay.  
If you want Wall Street reformed and redeemed or harmlessly laid on the shelf;  
You must get action, or else I have dreamed; redeeming, reforming yourself. *Paris, 6, 22, '11.*

### EX 2309

**G**UTTER snipes grow into jail-birds as easy as breaking the eggs  
Making the omelettes for millionaire pirates. Beer out of near-empty kegs  
Mother's milk fit for her finishing school, old Ma Manhattan fed me,  
Till the dream of my life was to beat up a cop. And I did it and went to stir. We  
Johnsing and I saw our finish right there, when a woman that all of you know  
Took us in tow like a couple of kids alone in the night and the snow.  
Johnsing's a coon. But he's white though inside, as the lilies of the valley we grow.  
  
This ain't no color-line argument, Nix. But if you believe that a man  
Starting like me has no cinch making good, it's a twenty to one shot you can  
See that the coon is in worse — and then some; when he starts the toboggan to brake.  
She knew I needed some one to look out for. Now we'd freeze hell for her sake.

"You've got to grow violets." Them were her orders.  
And a guy who cuts coupons for fun,  
Staked us and found us the land on Long Island. May-  
be you've seen how the sun  
Lights up a mirror when up goes a shade. That's what  
her love for us done.

Crooks are your mirrors. They're dead in the dark; and  
alive when you turn on the light.  
Johnsing was jailed since his razor was handy, and no  
one could see he was white.  
Now you should see him go kneeling around, transplant-  
ing carnations with care.  
Something to love every day he has found, and part of  
his life is a prayer.  
Neither of us is no saint even yet. Niggers will gam-  
ble and lie.  
And I guess it was born in my bones to get next to the  
booze any hour that I'm dry.  
But we're getting along and we're making it pay. And  
she don't have to tempt us to try.

I do the dealing. Believe me, there ain't many flies on  
the Greeks.  
Johnsing he fondles and talks to his flowers. And say,  
it's a song when he speaks.  
Sure they all love him. She tells us our vi'lets are  
sweeter than any she knows.  
Take it from me that a bunch of them follows her al-  
ways, wherever she goes.  
What do you think that the shop girls and swells who  
wear what we handle would say  
If they knew where they came from? I'd like to drop  
dead if you asked me to preach or to pray,  
But I guess that like Johnsing I'm printing God's prayers  
for the people most any old day.

*Bideford, 8, 19, '11.*



## VII FAILURES

### MAUDLIN

**W**ELL, you see what I am.  
And you don't give a damn:  
Not one in ten thousand, both women and men,  
Whose linen is clean and who live in the light;  
Who can smear your gloved hands and then wash them  
again,  
When no one gets next; and pretend they are white.

God Almighty himself sent our like to the pen;  
Dutch Sadie beside me, my mother before me.  
And she drank till she died. And the devils that tore me  
When I broke loose last night, sang my first lullabys.  
Don't you think that you'd drink just to stifle the cries;  
When they're trapping a child?

That was Sadie. She looked like a millionaire's kid  
In the park when she smiled;  
When she came from up state. Me I'd never a chance.  
I grew up on the garbage, in dark rooms that hid  
The sky and the sunshine. I learned how to dance,  
And I hit the toboggan when I was fifteen.

Nowadays though I'm square with the district machine,  
I can't put money by—and I'm stronger than most.  
I've been at it six years and I look like a ghost,  
When the paint's off. That's straight.

Say, is hell sure to wait  
For the brewers and sergeants who sell us wholesale?

## MAUDLIN

---

Do they ever get theirs when they're sick, scared too late?

And you others, when we sink in filth don't you fail?

You may shrug, turn away. We infest you like vermin;  
Poison body and soul. And the Judge shall determine  
Your sentence who womanhood murder and steal.

Spare your fake pity then, till we get God's square deal.

*New York, 4, 4, '10.*

### MACHINE OPERATIVES

**A**RE we dizzy? This is nothing. Speeded up, you  
lift your eye,  
Scarce a second sews your hand up. If it does you'd  
better die.

For the streets are sure to get you; just one little hu-  
man fly,

In a world that's full of spiders, spinning out an endless  
thread,

From the hour you curse the daylight and your fingers  
feel like lead,

Until night when you are almost happy dreaming you  
are dead.

Nerves and needles stab like lightning, and the hours  
drag on as slow

As an afternoon when nothing seems to stir or dare to  
grow;

And the sultry summer thunder growls and mutters, long  
and low:

While the gearing and machines go always growling,  
muttering.

Shreds of life beneath our fingers racing wheels and pul-  
leys bring,

Like the withered leaves that idle gusts before the tem-  
pest fling.

## MACHINE OPERATIVES

---

We are drifting, we are whirling, in a storm of speed  
and sound.

Day and night like giant stitches black and white go  
shifting round.

Till our brains are blurred, and every sense in ceaseless  
noise is drowned.

Only we are restless fingers plucking breaking threads  
away;

Only eyes that gaze unseeing through the splendor of  
the day;

Only nerves that feel the strain, and throbbing, strug-  
gling life delay.

Senseless, restless, faithless, hopeless, loveless, dream-  
less, shameless, blind;

Shaping patterns for our sisters, by perdition's hands  
designed;

This alone of truth eternal in our shrivelled souls we  
find.

Multiplying, deifying ugliness in garments new;  
Mummy wrappings for your spirits, hiding heaven here  
from view,

Loveliness and truth and beauty; we infect the earth and  
you.

*Bath Beach, 8, 20, '10.*

## THE SHOP GIRL

I AM lonely and I'm weary and I shrink beneath the  
lash,

You can't see it, but it's there; I'm sick of calling out  
for cash;

Tired of selling idle women things they haven't time to  
wear,

Tired of seeing senseless faces lose the light that made  
them fair:

## THE SHOP GIRL

---

Sick of starving soul and body on six dollars week by week.

Tired of handling silk and satin, hearing girls beside me speak

With a child's crude adoration of the toys that tempt me too;

Sick of hours and days and years, that bring and promise nothing new:

Sick of cracked and fly specked mirrors, blotched wall papers, ceilings low,

Narrow walls and endless noise and breathless air. I'm wild to go

Where there's beauty, open spaces, gentle voices, grace and rest.

And I hate each fat floor walker, modern eunuchs, overdressed.

And I loathe the leers and insults, bids to dinners, dance halls, shame;

While I sell my life for nothing, growing timid, weak and tame;

More and more the slave of things, of millions of machine made hells

Where Americans and neighbors shut themselves in prison cells.

I am sick of greasy dishes, linen smeared and bath-tubs shared,

Till the city's sordid essence saturates the soul that dared, Dreamed, exulted, thrilled; believed in truth eternal, fair and free;

Sick of pulses throbbing faint towards life and love and liberty:

Sick of clothes that must be mended, hats contrived with none to praise,

## THE SHOP GIRL

---

Pleasures wrung from weary fingers through a round  
of dreary days;  
Sick of memory and longing, dreams that vanish and  
deride,  
Sick of books like life's shop windows mocking all the  
world outside:

Sick of my own face that's fading; sick of Broadway  
calling loud,  
"Take your chance while you have time, and try your  
luck here in the crowd.  
Better stake your soul and lose it, live your hour that  
youth demands,  
Than to waste your life by inches, let it slip between  
your hands."

Oh, I want my home, my children, all creation's dear  
old plan,  
Pain and pleasure, growth enduring; most of all I want  
a Man.

*St. John's, Newfoundland, 7, 16, '10.*

## THE CHAUFFEUR

ONCE I drove a racing car. I'd joy-ride just with  
speed,  
Eighty miles an hour or more. One day a tire it busted  
Skidding round a hat-pin turn, where all your nerve you  
need.  
Now to run a taxi-cab they think I can be trusted.

Something broke inside my works or maybe in my  
brain.  
There are days the gears won't mesh, and days I can't  
be caring  
If I drive my fares to Hell; and when it's fairly plain  
They are due there anyhow! I see old Satan staring;

## THE CHAUFFEUR

---

Up and down his Great White Way where open house he  
keeps;

Free to all who have the price, money, beauty, folly.  
Every time a harlot laughs they say a woman weeps.  
Thousands have to watch and pray while Broadway  
learns to jolly.

Where they come from, has me guessing. Where they  
go I know.

I'm the devil's livery man. I help the darlings hurry  
Down to hell, the whole year round. It's no man's  
work, I know

Something's broke inside my works, and now I never  
worry.

Something's broke inside them too. You hear this mo-  
tor's sound,

Every last explosion bound to those before and after.  
Broadway says "Advance the spark." And so my  
wheels go round

Faster; faster, bubbles break where wine rooms leak  
with laughter.

Sure I hear them here, outside. And that's the worst  
of it.

When you're off and on your way, you're watching  
where you're going.

When you have to sit and wait, like flames that lick the  
Pit,

Like that writing on the wall; those white lights glow-  
ing, growing;

Get my goat. They got you too in Babylon, old scout.  
Don't you care. The kid's a peach. We're on our way  
together

Back to Satan's black garage. When all the lights go  
out

She won't ever ask us why, or how, or when, or whether.

*New York, 5, 24, '11.*

## THE SPONGE

**W**HAT in God's name have you done to have a son  
like me?

I am the weakness in your rotten soul that all men see.

Once you had your fighting chance. Your Octopus you  
made,

Chose to suck your substance up through tentacles of  
trade.

Curses, sweat and blood and tears of thousands every  
day,

These you take at second hand, and for them trade away  
Freedom to go out and look your fellows in the eyes;  
Power to win from them the gifts that money never  
buys,

Worship, faith and truth and love and loyalty that you  
Murder in yourself and me and millions like us too:

Freedom to go forth and look your Maker in the face.

While you shut yourself up here to see a ticker race,

Far and wide outside your cell the woods and fields are  
green,

Springtime comes and never knows your grafter's grim  
machine.

Seas and sunsets, mountain peaks and stars you never  
see.

Once they took a prisoner from a dungeon (that was me)

Out of blackness into day and left me there to blink.

Dad, you're worse. They've made you blind. You  
never tried to think

Of the things you leave undone, the blacker things you  
do

By machines and telephones; that I bring back to you.

Lord, if you could help to make a hundred like me, why  
Should you spare your flesh and blood, or save me from  
the sty

## THE SPONGE

---

That your Wall Street money makes for rich men's sons,  
and girls  
That the devil deals to them? Your roulette marble  
whirls.  
That's the world that you have made a marker for your  
game  
Where the stakes are watered stock and rottenness and  
shame.  
There you sit and suck it in and squeeze the world for  
more.  
Some one's got to squeeze you too. And that's what I  
am for,  
You're a sponge for money, Dad, and I'm a sponge  
for booze,  
Maybe I am worse than you. But who's got most to  
lose?

*New York, 1, 3, '12.*

## RENO

**G**O to Reno? Go to hell. We know what it means,  
Who make life one huge hotel. Satan set these  
scenes,  
Desert drift and alkali, sage brush, crumbling bones  
Where he made his human sty, turned our hearts to  
stones.

Once I saw a rancher's wife with her white haired kid—  
Mother mirrored to the life—watching where I hid  
Back of gray lace curtains looped like tainted lingerie.  
God forgive her if she stooped to envy things like me.

Once they built a dance hall here fifty years ago.  
There they made their desert cheer, watched the bub-  
bles flow;  
Girls like bubbles swiftly drained, flung them fast aside  
Where they railroad, frayed and stained, every lime-  
light's bride.



## RENO

---

I have seen in Tokio Satan light a street;  
Girls like paper lanterns glow, robed the rich to meet;  
Smiling, trembling, peering through bars till some one  
buys  
For a midnight hour or two flesh to brutalize.

We, America has made Yoshiwara girls  
For a year or two to trade purity for pearls;  
On our new installment plan marriages we make  
Till we meet a richer man. Then our bonds you break:

You who make us what we are; you who subsidize  
Panders, shysters, bench and bar; you whose money buys  
Mistresses men tolerate, and their women too  
Since they're seeking, soon or late, what we did to do.

Rapid transit happiness, bargain counter love,  
That's the sort of swift success we have sickened of.  
You who've time to count the cost, take a fool's advice  
Once—you may be saved or lost.—But the damned try  
twice. *New York, 1, 4, '12.*

### THE DRESSMAKER

I GO to church on Sunday and I try to worship there.  
Six days a week I make the clothes that godless  
women wear.

I'm not as young as once I was. I'm hard and tough  
outside.

But still I can remember times I took my proper pride  
In making bodies beautiful, according to the style  
Of '89 or '91. To-day I make them vile.

I took a trip to Paris this summer to find out  
If things were worse there really now than anywhere  
about  
Broadway and Forty-Second Street. I saw their demi  
monde

## THE DRESSMAKER

---

That sets the styles for all the world. And how men  
can be fond  
Of those painted cats and monkeys, to me's a mystery.  
And why our women want to wear their clothes I've  
yet to see.

Now I'm no prude or Puritan. I walked around the  
Louvre  
And I saw their naked Venuses. I felt I could approve  
Of the one they call the Milo; she's a lesson to be strong  
And straight and brave and beautiful, a sort of marble  
song.  
And there came and stood beside her once a customer of  
mine  
In an up-to-date creation, the kind they call divine.

I wanted first to laugh, and then to cry, and then in  
shame  
I saw the work of my own hands and felt my face aflame.  
There's another naked Venus I'm not a-saying where:  
She's the Devil's own dear daughter. And my thoughts  
go straying there,  
And to Greece where she was worshiped; and it some-  
times seems to me  
I'm a sort of pagan priestess for all eternity.

I love to see and handle silk and linen just as men  
Are bound to feel toward flesh and hair that's lovely.  
Maybe when  
Eve saw and stroked the serpent first she made us all  
that way.  
It seems as if I'd have to starve or sell my soul to-day.  
I don't look at sick street walkers now, the way I used  
to do.  
But these multi-millionairesses, they'll ruin me and you.  
*Paris, 5, 15, '11.*

## THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

**I** KNOW twenty men who'd give me fifty thousand dollars for  
This typewritten sheet of paper. Here's the telephone at hand.  
And he's gone. He's not. He's here. I see him always; everywhere;  
When I'm waking; when I'm sleeping. I cannot; I do not dare.  
He has made me; hypnotized me; till I'm his. I understand  
What he wants and how he gets it; how he's always grasping more.

I go on. I take his orders; I am made a mere machine;  
A typewriter for his purpose, spelling out his iron will;  
Things untrue, unfair, unlawful; merciless and shameless. Here  
Yesterday he stole a franchise; wrecked a railroad; filled with fear  
Fifteen hundred strikers watching hunger's hands their children kill.  
Now a perjured judge is bowing down before his eyes unclean.

Now he buys a senator; and now he sells the people lies  
In the press he subsidizes. I his evil errands run.  
Send his corporation counsels, bosses, grafters; here and there.  
So he sways me. So he took me out of Wall Street, shame, despair;  
Into slavery more subtle. And the evil we have done  
Day by day must drag me down to depths from which I never rise.

For my wife with jeweled fingers, draws our dividends of wrong;  
Shallow, soulless, hard, insatiate; always spending, grasping more.

## THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

---

Neither of us has to-day in all New York, a single friend.

And my boy and girl are going to be like her in the end. She'd have made herself his mistress if he'd let her long before.

I'm a pander to his plunder; his seduction of the strong.

So I sit and watch the others. Some come licking greedy lips.

Some white faced and tense and trembling, as to death go through that door.

I hear voices raised in anger, footsteps striding to and fro.

I come in and sign a paper; see a flush that rises slow, Furtive eyes, and twitching masks of manhood fallen to the floor:

While the hope of God's salvation through my feeble fingers slips.

*Bideford, 8, 11, '11.*

## THE CLIMBER

YOU won't marry Oxbridge? You'll turn down a duke, one who's rich and half decent at that;

When your father will give you ten millions as soon as the check for a gown or a hat,

If I say so? My daughter, you've had your own way, we have spoiled and indulged you too long.

That's not what you want? Only love? You're a fool. And time's going to prove you are wrong.

You had better go now before both of us say the things we'd be bound to regret.

Was it this that I've worked for and schemed for and dreamed in the days that I'll never forget;

When I stood over wash tubs, cooked messes for miners, and slaved till my will made its way

## THE CLIMBER

---

Like the drill that I've handled; and tunneled the hill,  
to the reef where the mother lode lay?  
Then I rammed down my dynamite, set off my fuse.  
And I jarred this town loose with its roar.  
And when others jumped back I went in and went up.  
When a key failed I broke down the door.

And I got there. And women kow tow to me now who  
once cut me dead. 'Tain't enough.  
It ain't worth the time and the trouble; the banting, mas-  
sage and the rest of that stuff;  
And the imbecile babble, the clothes of barbarians, that  
lunatics only would wear  
If we hadn't our goal; and the snickering servants, the  
hussy that musses my hair  
Till she gets on my nerves; and the others unpaid, each  
flunkey, each maid that I've bought,  
That I've wined and I've dined, that I've scared till they  
whined; that pose as the leaders of thought  
And of fashion, like monkeys and dogs that you see at  
a music hall trying to dance;  
When their only ambition's to follow the fools manu-  
factured in England and France.

Yes, I've grafted and got there, I'm hated and feared and  
envied and geared to the game.  
And I can't let it go. And it's hell to hold on. And my  
Cyrus I guess feels the same  
On the Street. When he's here he's like me in my cor-  
sets. Believe me, we'd like to go back  
To the days when we hustled the grub for the gang that  
was laying that Idaho track.  
And the girl may be right. Though our love petered  
out, the dollars we dug for remain.  
And her sister is softer. She'll do what I say. And  
I've got to go through it again.

## THE CLIMBER

---

I'll pull wires, and I'll swap and I'll soap and I'll splurge.  
And I'll bluff and I'll blackmail and buy.

I'll hire detectives, and set on my servants and toadies  
to slander and spy.

And I'll marry her off to a man of the world with a  
title, and also a hold

That I'll have over him. For I'm taking no chances.  
She'll fetch her full price when she's sold.

Like as not she'll be learning to hate me in time. (So  
my pace makers here I detest.)

And she'll teach her own girls and grand-daughters to  
climb. And I wish I was dead there out West.

*Bideford, 8, 17, '11.*

## THE FELON

**I** WAS despised and rejected of men. I was anointed  
with sweat and with tears,  
Branded a brute and bewildered, and then chained to the  
treadmill of merciless years.

I was benighted, besmirched and betrayed. I was dis-  
eased in my mad mother's womb.

Out of your sewers my spirit was made; spawn of the  
slum and its slime and its gloom.

There where lost lives flicker low like the day, like a pin  
point of gas in the pestilent air;

Spawn of the gutters, with vice for our play, drink for  
our Sacrament, drugged with despair,

Swabbing saloons till we choke with the smoke and the  
reek of the millions; our murderers taught

Crime's master masonry, climb. And I woke. And I  
broke from the Yoke. I was trailed. I was caught.

Therefore you tried me and put me away, in the prison  
you made for your cesspit of sin.

Therefore you stole all the light of my day, and you  
murdered the life that God kindled within.

So I am crucified here in the dark by the horror that  
creeps through the dead of the night,

## THE FELON

---

Till I pray for my Warder's step crushing the spark that  
alone is alive in a soul never white.

I am the voice of the dead that alive you doom to the  
tomb. So your treason and trades,

Prosper; your lies and your perjuries thrive. And you  
laugh with your wantons. You marry your maids.

I am the cry of the underworld's heart and the throb of  
its pulses convulsive and dumb.

'And I beat and repeat till you tremble and start. 'And  
I summon my judges to judgment to come.

I am the poet your greed has profaned, and the painter  
you blind, the musician you maimed.

I am the preacher disowned and disdained, and the  
teacher your treasons have starved and have shamed.

I am the beauty, the light and the truth of the world  
that you waste on the floor of my cell.

I am the dreams and the loves of your youth, that you  
lost in your haste when you left me in hell.

I am the smile of your children and wives that you  
cheapen and taint in your worship of trade.

I am the tears of a nation's lost lives and the hunger  
and horror your millions have made.

I am the deeds that you do, that undone shall fetter your  
feet and shall humble your haste:

In the streets where you darken the light of the sun, in  
the hearts that you harden, the years that you waste.

I am despair in your own iron soul, and the walls and  
the blackness that baffle and blind.

I am a share of the way and the goal, and the shadow  
that wavers before and behind.

I am a ray of the infinite Light, and the voice that still  
vital shall whisper to me,

"Out of His prisons of error and night in the dawn of  
His day, we shall rise and go free."

*New York, 1, 13, '11.*

## VIII THE PROFESSIONS

### *THE INTERNE*

**O**UTSIDE a clock strikes muffled. A pointing hand  
of shade  
Stretches along the floor to where the patient white is  
laid.  
Around the steep arena the benches slowly fill.  
Life through its funnel filters down to meet the master  
will.

He enters with the others, his white robed priests of pain.  
He sees a table set with steel for the feast each avid  
brain,  
Like hounds that strain in leashes, awaits. He motions  
towards  
A nurse who holds her bandages like sacrificial cords.

The faint sick scent of ether invades an air grown tense.  
The cone, a huge extinguisher, is held till thought and  
sense  
Like the flicker of a candle from the form inert draw  
back.  
One boy the sense of drama feels. One quivers on the  
rack.

The sheet is stripped from the body. Masks from the  
faces fall,  
Passions like vultures hover round one will that grips  
them all,  
As he grasps each raw red muscle. He smooths their  
tangled skeins  
As his knife like a needle threads the snarl of arteries  
and veins.



## THE INTERNE

---

Deeper he digs and deeper till the tumor's bulk he bares,  
Kernel of death in the living flesh, focus of far off pray-  
ers.

Like lovers' swift caresses, the steel and sponges play:  
Till at last like a pearl from its oyster the prize is reft  
away.

And as the laden diver labors toward life and air,  
To the line of the weak heart's limit he races. Students  
stare

At his sutures sure and rapid, at cords that felt the  
knife

Fresh knotted. Now he breathes. He holds the pearl  
of rescued life,

Safe in his hands. Here half an hour earth's essence  
sublimates.

He turns to where his motor, another clinic, waits.  
And like the Good Physician in planets past our ken,  
Goes at his time appointed to operate again.

*Paris, 6, 17, '08.*

## THE SURGEON

**I**T'S quiet here at two o'clock. Night's anaesthetic  
stills

The fever of the city and the breathlessness that kills.  
I can dissect the purpose of this clash of human wills:

These housetops in the moonlight like the stumps that  
fill a field

Where a forest is extinguished and God's goodness is  
revealed

By a million amputations; where to-morrow is concealed.

We are this city's foresters. We lop and pare and prune,  
We carve away the dead wood from the vital things that  
soon

Shall arise in stately beauty like a forest aisle in June.

## THE SURGEON

---

For the trees grow very slowly, and more slowly grows  
the soul.

You may starve and maim and stunt it: you may wrest  
it from its goal;

While it wrestles through the centuries. We learn to  
make it whole.

You make life hard and hateful in your wilderness of  
stone.

You crowd and crush the children. And nature to atone  
Shall oversee her saplings till the strongest live alone.

She sends her storms to thin them, and her plagues that  
choke and burn.

We pick the broken pieces up, and we devise and learn  
New fire guards, anti-toxins new, through her tuition  
stern.

We have done more. We sentinel the very springs of  
life,

We keep your milk and water pure. The stricken in the  
strife

Have found the fountains of the heart unsealed beneath  
our knife.

We make the blind to see again. The clot that clouds  
the brain

We shall absorb, the doubt that sees a world of fear and  
pain

And earth an operating table buried by the slain.

We are the lymph that clears your blood. The last cru-  
sades of man

We lead. No longer in the rear the weary surgeons  
scan

The wrecks that stagger through the smoke. Our own  
campaigns we plan.

## THE SURGEON

---

We go ahead, we pioneer; our microscopes shall find  
The vision of the end of all; of cells to death designed,  
Evolved to share the labors of the last immortal Mind.

*Bath Beach, 8, 9, '10.*

### SCIENCE

**T**HERE'S Edison. He's made himself a fortune and  
a name.

Score one exception if you will. But still the rule is  
proved.

The world's a million times more rich. Not money,  
power, or fame

We seek who shred the husks of truth. Her essence far  
removed,

Eludes us still. We love her so with love no women  
know.

Science is service—free to all—and something more as  
well;

The will to live, that scans the void; the stars; above,  
below;

The vital fitness to survive that charts the flames of hell.

Look backward while the lava flares. The caveman's  
clouded brain

Dull, inchoate, unfathomed, like his world of doubt and  
dread,

Rubs fire from wood till tinder flames. And light is  
born again;

And space envisioned issues from an ape's misshapen  
head.

So Pallas truly came to birth, by stages sore and slow;  
And truth her blood red frontiers won; and cities  
sacked, afire;

And martyr torches marked them out. For man was  
made to know:

## SCIENCE

---

A Phoenix mind that lifts the blind and spurns its  
funeral pyre.

False science, Inquisitions, made new Reformations.  
Thought

Grew wider, deeper, more intense, as light was set to  
light;

Till lamps became electric orbs. And freedom dearly  
bought

Men sell to-day, they still betray to all the powers of  
night.

But here we hold our inner shrine. Our laboratory  
flames,

We forge our arms. Our pioneers shall scout the shores  
of dread.

We slay disease. We trail the germ. We learn new  
living names.

We write the Book of Life itself till fear and doubt lie  
dead.

The stricken city sinks and groans. We come. The  
plague is stayed.

We wipe pollution from her stones, and error, lust and  
greed.

We wield the whole world's battle lines. Our surgeons  
lend their aid.

And where one army wavers back we send men to suc-  
ceed.

And you of little faith who fail; who blindly seek your  
own;

Think you our Master made one world, one soul, to live  
alone.

*New York, 3, 22, '11.*

## THE INVENTOR

**N**OW Peary's pierced the bull's eye of the globe.  
The Pole is won.  
They've mapped the Bramapootra's source. The last exploring's done.  
All Africa's a game reserve. Our own frontier is lost.  
In our restless race for money we never count the cost  
Of greed that eats the earth itself. But some one still  
must find  
New messages for millions, and new hopes for human  
kind.

The scouts of science sift and scan the atom and the sky.  
And we, to-day's prospectors, must strive and starve and  
die,  
Along the city's grim frontier of poverty and pain,  
And all the lusts of life and power. We fail. We solve  
again  
The problems that the race must prove until the end of  
time.  
Our last equation simplifies. One further step we climb.

We see the Secret, look for light. The jungle all around  
Lays hold on us. Some struggle out to where success is  
found,  
And money. Find your gold mine first, and then win  
back to tell  
The world. Be sure you file your claims exactly, soon  
and well.  
Nature and her highwaymen to hold you up will try.  
That's business up to date that steals unless it's forced  
to buy.

Brains find the mine. But Capital must manufacture ore  
And hog the profits. Grit gets there. That's what we're  
put here for.  
To generate new energy, adjust, contrive, win through.  
They say that I've been lucky. Well, I wouldn't change  
with you.

## THE INVENTOR

---

I've lived on bread and beans for weeks. I've starved  
and sweated out

My monoplane, a sporting toy I care two cents about.

That's ammunition for the rest. The quest itself should  
pay

If you only keep a going. But you won't win every day  
New service for the multitude, and find the deal is  
square.

They've got to pay as you did. And the pirates loot  
their share.

We find the Grail in engines grim, in blood and smut  
and sweat,

But it's capital that's cornered coal that keeps us going  
yet.

*London, 9, 1, '11.*

## THE JUDGE

**M**ORE than three score centuries justice slowly saw;  
Crudely made an image and an idol of the law;  
Blindfolded a woman; left her hand to lift the scales.  
That is justice up to date that tries her case and fails.

Now we learn the law of life. Science makes it plain.  
Law is truth that rises, falls, grows and stands again.  
Now we plan a world's campaign. Dogma, darkness,  
doubt;

Falter, fester, fear in vain; till greed goes down in rout.

Nature knows no penalties nor yet rewards to-day;  
Consequences only, saying "Suffer or obey."  
Law is evolution and the mind that masters it.  
Law is conservation of the righteous and the fit.

Law is opportunity free to each and all.

Law is progress shared and earned alike by great and  
small;

Larger insight every year, more capable control.

Law defines a nation's debts and codifies its soul.

## THE JUDGE

---

Law administers and learns to economize  
National estates. And law the test supreme applies —  
For the most the greatest good. It taxes wealth to feed  
Sick men in our hospitals and orphans in their need.

Property it still protects, the property of man;  
Railroads, rivers, forests, mines; protecting where it can.  
Precedent it still respects, remembering always  
Pioneers make precedents; from cavemen to to-day.

Law is economic insight, righting civic wrong.  
Law is martial discipline that makes a nation strong.  
Judges at our city gates o'er highways of the free;  
Nature for no fossil waits. We grow or cease to be.  
*New York, 9, 21, '10.*

## RAILROADS

**M**Y robber baron's tower of steel I magnetize with  
power.

And here the wires of all the world shall bear me hour  
by hour

A higher voltage, wider outlook; force that freely flows  
Here to the eye, the ear that clearer still its mission  
knows.

I see the countless multitudes, chaotic, crowd the street.  
I see the liners thread the bay. My rails and car floats  
meet

By the borders of the rivers. Four million focused  
wills

Look up to me to curse or bless. And life electric  
thrills,

To the pressure of my finger, to the vibrance of my  
voice.

I speak a word. My rail heads make a desert land  
rejoice.

## RAILROADS

---

I make the maps of Empires new. I earn your scorn  
and hate.

And all the while I toil for you. I make you rich and  
great.

I keep the traffic moving. I open mountain trails.  
I bring to-morrow nearer still. I relay wires and rails.  
I hold you up. I give you time that a million fold repays.  
You in a few short hours shall climb where your fathers  
toiled for days.

And all the traffic stands to-day, I and my markets  
charge.

And nature's orders we obey, her justice stern and large.  
I lower grades because it pays. And when you force  
me to

I'll lower rates and ship your freights and profit so with  
you.

I see my trains across your plains to-morrow's fabric  
weave.

They smear to-day with smuts and stains; and wrecks  
and widows leave.

Their trestles shadow ugliness. They have exalted more.  
And clean success at last shall bless the things that we  
stand for.

This is the primal law of life; forever as of old;  
To war with weakness to the knife, and what you have  
to hold,

Your strong machine to standardize, discarding all unfit;  
To organize, to centralize, to hold your job or quit.

No man is indispensable. Our life work lasts a day.  
But what we build well may stand. And I have built  
to stay.

*S. S. Bruce, 7, 18, '10.*



## THE PROFESSOR

**P**OLITICAL economy you say that I am paid to  
teach,

Young socialist, a science grim and made by man devoid  
of heart.

Well let that pass. Define your terms; the household  
law, the civic art.

There's my ideal that's dim to-day, that some time we  
shall climb to reach.

Your Sociology is good, the science new of brotherhood.  
But brotherhood is based on facts, the iron letter of the  
law:

So many murders once a year; divorce, seduction, fraud,  
they saw

The constants of life's formula, who first its factors  
understood.

They tabulate their law of rent. And you cry out as  
children might

Against the mere arithmetic that tells you two and two  
is four,

In massacres or sacraments; forever neither less nor  
more.

They tested and interpreted the truth that lay within  
their sight.

So nature's averages to-day with larger scope we search  
and scan;

The life that moves in wider waves. We seek the  
sources of the tides.

And this we know. No law discloses something meas-  
ureless that hides

In rise and fall of galaxies; and in the mind and heart  
of man.

Political Economy puts Evolution in the street.

Its iron letters spell the law that man grows slowly fit  
to know,

## THE PROFESSOR

---

It's fifty thousand years since we were apes. And fifty  
years ago

I read the words where Lincoln sounded slavery's su-  
preme defeat.

To-day your social consciousness is militant. It stirs  
the race.

Men do the deeds of darkness still. We organize, and  
wrongs retreat.

We chart the curve of truth that rises stronger still from  
each defeat.

And earth with us insurgent climbs; in rising spirals  
conquers space.

Science is patience long and sure. It tells a truth that  
cannot lie;

The mind that slowly tames the brute, eternal both as  
stars in night.

Devise your systems as you may, you may not hasten  
morning's light;

And in the vital rise of man, the how must follow still  
the why.

*Bideford, 8, 5, '11.*

## THE BUILDER

**L**OOK twenty stories down and sheer, and east and  
west and south,

And see the crowded avenues in long processions march  
In rank on rank and block on block, straight from the  
river's mouth

To where the northern twilight builds a gray triumphal  
arch.

This is my watch tower of to-day, and as a builder scans  
From some tall pier at sunset, unfinished, like his plans,

The work that waits; I watch New York unfinished,  
brutal, vast;

## THE BUILDER

---

Strong as her million hammer beats that rivet home  
to-day.

Battering ram and battle axe, battalions of the past.  
Wrought out her rough foundations; and the end is far  
away.

I have a poet's sight to-night. I write with steel. I see  
Her elemental molding towards the triumph that shall be.

Mine is the oldest art of all. The strongholds of the  
soul,

Before man made his written word or symbolized sight  
and sound;

I learned to dig, to roof, to range. On high I set my  
goal.

Tower and pyramid and spire my crowded cities crowned.  
To-day each tall sky scraper stands, to cosmic stature  
grown.

And giant groups of lifted hands grasp at a God un-  
known.

And graft and greed in them are great, and black their  
shadow lies.

They are the tools of time and fate, more strong than  
wind and sun.

They raise new currents in the air. They watch with  
myriad eyes

The city's tidal ebb and flow. Till daylight's task is done  
They hear its monotonous resound. Voices that would be  
free,

Out of its stormy surf of sound they lift to liberty.

They are the sun-dials of the soul. And these my hand  
has made,

My brain has planned. I take my toll of all men com-  
pass here.

Each world hotel is mine; and mine each temple tall of  
trade,

## THE BUILDER

---

Where souls that strive for mastery grow dead to doubt  
and fear.

This is the oldest creed of all, that whoso labors prays.  
I build their triumphs, great and small, who live for  
larger days.

*New York, 5, 10, '10.*

## THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

**Y**OU do not believe in a personal devil. Your competition has crowded him out.

Your corporations have lowered his level. You raise your tariffs, and treason and doubt

And sin and Satan are syndicated. Your heaven is overcapitalized.

Your hell is machine made, your God he is hated, your prophets are false, and your law is despised.

This have we done for you; you who have made us greed and the devil's devout advocates;

Taken your contracts whenever you paid us, robbed and polluted your cities and states;

Made the law merchandise; spoiled, prostituted the soul of a people; made treason a trust;

All of your orders, inspired, executed; making a system of murder and lust.

There where the red lights like embers of hell smolder; the shysters, the jackals of vice,

Fatten on offal. They buy and they sell infamy; parasites, Satan's gray lice,

Old in their craft. And the bondsmen and crooks, panders who all for protection have paid;

Deal with them, steal with them, keep in their books. Wholesale in lust and infection they trade.

## THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

---

We are your shysters. We buy and we sell privilege  
for capital, partner with crime;  
Women and slaves we have sent down to hell where your  
tall tenements festering climb;  
Babies we murder by torments more slow than Ignatius  
in Spain ever ordered of old.  
Your inquisition, your Press, people know slowly at last,  
for a Lie that is sold.

So like the rest you have bought us and sold us, jury  
and judge, legislators and thugs.  
Treason's retainers, its honors, still hold us. We are the  
Devil's. We deal in his drugs.  
Hatred and fraud we have mixed for a nation; greed  
and the lust of the mind that is blind,  
Working damnation; that somehow salvation, somewhere,  
to-day for to-morrow might find.

We are your spokesmen. And so for the devil bartered  
and chained to your iron machine,  
We are pleading to-day while your cog-wheels we bevel,  
stooping and splashed by your puddles obscene.  
Cynics and slaves to your passions we see you; (Like-  
wise ourselves in perdition we saw.)  
Knowing that Love alone struggles to free you, bound  
by the chains of ineffable law.

*New York, 4, 18, '11.*

## THE ENGINEER

**B**BROWN has gone out to New Zealand, (Brown came  
from Boston he did.)  
In search of a city where graft is unknown and they've  
padlocked forever the lid.  
Brown isn't going to find it. The day that he sailed,  
he sat here,

## THE ENGINEER

---

Taking my time at ten dollars an hour and making his  
sentiments clear;  
Puritan conscience demanding "What's the good of all  
this that you do  
When the grafters can gouge you and pare down your  
bids, and then steal from taxpayers, too?  
I'm for the path of the Pilgrims." "That question was  
put first," I said,  
"By a cavé man who swore at the middle man's share  
as he finished a flint arrow head.  
Rome's engineers when the road of the legions from  
Tiber to Tigris they laid,  
Dickered with bosses, and dealt with contractors. And  
they stayed with the job. And it paid."

What is the use you might ask just as well of the acque-  
ducts spanning the plan,  
Bringing hill water to good and bad still, as freely God  
sends His rain?  
What is the good of the farmer, the rain, the earth and  
the seed that he sows;  
When surely as sunshine that ripens the grain, when he's  
thrashed it and sacked it he knows  
Graft will reach out from the railroad, grabbing and  
gouging its share;  
Corners like eddies will form in the pit and the whirl-  
pool of shame and despair?  
How dare men, money, gunpowder, printing, telephones,  
motors, invent;  
Link up the rails and the wires on the trails that we cut  
through a new continent;  
Harness the air with Marconi; biplanes evolve, though  
we know  
Grafters like pestilence faster shall follow; and take in  
their tolls as they go?

## THE ENGINEER

---

Put these things up to the surgeons who pick up the  
pieces to-day.  
We who are pioneers, men of our hands and fighters,  
must find our own way.  
Bread must be brought to the hungry; water to thirsty  
lands led.  
There lies my last irrigation profile. Down from that  
same watershed,  
Long distance power transmission stretches a finger of  
light  
Five hundred miles to a city's black slum. Some must  
go down in the fight.  
Quicksands and friction divert and delay. Greed and re-  
sentment obstruct.  
We must go on, deal with each as we may, carrying  
life's aqueduct  
Down from the hills, the ideals that are strong and high,  
to the cities below.  
Sometimes the grade must be slow, aye and long that  
the water in safety may flow.

*Bideford, 5, 18, '11.*

## IX PUBLICITY

### THE MUCK RAKE EDITOR

**Y**OU have seen my presses, linotypes, typewriters,  
telephones.  
You have heard my vibrant harp of life, my voice of  
iron tones,  
Above the city's symphony of steam and steel and stones,  
And the brutal and black machine that manhood  
mars and owns.

## THE MUCK RAKE EDITOR

---

You will forget. You will go forth into the blaze of day,  
And the vision half evoked shall fail as a film must  
fade away

Unfixed, exposed to sunlight, in your breathless work  
and play;

While the wheels that grip you speed you up; betray,  
distort and slay.

Their trenchant saw-toothed edges have laid your for-  
ests low.

They chew to rotting paper pulp the living things that  
grow;

That sodden line that gutters where the children never  
know

The wonder of the woods and hills, where winds of heaven  
blow.

Not in your slums and mills alone your minds and hearts  
have made

The desiccated fabric of your ritual of trade;

The desecrated fragments pale, that fall and fail and fade,  
Of nature's fair impressions that your tyrannies degrade.

For the mills of God grind slowly, and His presses thun-  
der down,

And they jar your ears with riot; and the torments of  
the town

They crush into your consciousness; all other music  
drown;

Till a yellow journal's head lines shriek your honor's  
creed and crown.

These are His city's acid tests, His litmus papers red.  
And grime and sweat deface them, and the tears and  
blood we shed.

And the human frail by-products fail, the proof sheets  
smear and shred.

And the presses print the faster though your living souls  
grow dead.



## THE MUCK RAKE EDITOR

---

They strike to-day's significance, its Scriptures stern and vast.

They reconcile your greeds and creeds, to-morrow and the past.

So have I made my own machine, my matrix typed and cast,

Where Truth her letters slowly spells to save us at the last.

*Detroit, 6, 24, '10.*

### CENTRAL

**A** HUGE card catalog I know of ten square miles of crowded earth,

My switchboard is. Its signals show. At each my hands achieve a birth.

I link your lives together there. The future and the past confer.

I am the servant of despair, no less than love's blind worshiper.

I am the midwife of your minds. As life's old servant never sees

The end of all she looses, binds; I weave to-morrow's destinies.

My web is steel, each word a thread. I form a living fabric so.

I shuttle shame and doubt and dread. I lend life nerves that it may grow.

Though men may build their bridges high and plant their piers below the sea,

And drive their trains across the sky; a higher task is left to me.

I bridge the void 'twixt soul and soul; I bring the longing lovers near.

I draw you to your spirit's goal. I serve the ends of fraud and fear.

## CENTRAL

---

The older fates sat in the sun. The cords they spun  
were short and slight.  
I set my stiches one by one, where life electric fetters  
night,  
Till it outstrips the planet's speed, and out of darkness  
leaps to day;  
And men in Maine shall hear and heed a voice from San  
Francisco Bay.

I am your Delphic pythoness. I speak to you in sym-  
bols strange.  
My numbers that shall spell success or ruin, recklessly  
I range.  
And yet their average higher runs beneath my fingers,  
I am sure;  
That life's long problems for your sons more true and  
vital may endure.

Through all the city's storm of sound I hear a mighty  
symphony.  
And voices murmur all around that prisoned spirits may  
be free.  
The midnight comes. They fall asleep. I long for love  
I have not known;  
For beds of pain where mothers weep. I relay life. I  
live alone.

*New York, 5, 16, '11.*

## THE BOOKKEEPER

FROM yonder tall sky scraper, a ledger column of  
light,  
They cross the figures one by one; each window turns  
to night.  
The labor of the day is done, we may not linger here  
Who cast accounts and balances to make its meaning  
clear.

## THE BOOKKEEPER

---

Each bowed and gray accountant who bends before his  
books,

Sets forth each entry clearly there, nor ever closer looks;  
Who knows his master's hands are hard, nor dares their  
anger brave

Lest wife and children starve with him, whose soul is  
Mammon's slave:

Shall not this man's damnation too to your account be  
laid,

Who widows' mites and orphan heirs have plundered and  
betrayed;

Who drive hard bargains in the dark; and on the seventh  
day

Go up to God in all men's sight to pass the plate and  
pray?

You build your towers of Babel like yon benighted one.  
Your bring confusion to the land; and when the day is  
done

You sit like hungry spiders in the iron web of greed  
Your city spreads across the earth; and on its life blood  
feed.

And the young and strong and confident come up to you  
like flies.

You compass their destruction with cold incurious eyes.  
And potter's field and dive and jail and safety vault you  
fill;

And serve your own life sentences of solitaries still.

And One who keeps accounts above shall balance life  
for life;

A million made, a trust betrayed, a harlot once a wife;

A claim denied, a suicide; a youth your felon grown.

These are the risks your law allows who live your lives  
alone.

And I in doubt and trembling set down the deeds ye do;  
The clerk of that eternal court whose judgment waits  
for you,

## THE BOOKKEEPER

---

Till stars and flowers and children's smiles, and love you  
thrust away,

And pale and desperate faces confront you in that day.

*Paris, 11, 28, '08.*

### THE ADVERTISER

**A**DVERTISE? Why the skies  
Are a sky sign shifting day by day.  
And the stars go drifting down their way,  
And they spell out "Where?" And each cosmic wink  
Is a link in the chain that makes men think;  
Like Broadway's blink. And the world grows wise.

Advertise! Jar their eyes,  
The way that the priest and the medicine-men  
Turned the trick; and the warriors when  
They sent their heralds to roar before,  
And crests and coats of arms they wore,  
And they threw their bluffs and their battle-cries.

Advertise. Magnetize  
The money that's due to you to flow.  
Trade is three-fourths credit you know.  
So we have added another stair  
To the march of man; and we're hustling there.  
Though half's hot air—the public buys.

Advertise. Tell your lies.  
We're wise to them, and we discount half.  
And we'll pay the price if you make us laugh.  
Over the bill boards, everywhere,  
Smiles that never come off for fair  
Lighten the care that joy denies.

Advertise. Art that dies,  
Tries in its garret of gloom to live,  
Till orders for posters you happen to give.  
Then the lives of the millions far away  
From the Great White Way grow a little less gray.  
And the angels get wise. Advertise! Advertise!

*London, 8, 29, '11.*

## THE REPORTER

LIFE, it's just the greatest story ever.  
Twenty years I've lived it here and loved  
it;

Seen Manhattan move, and men and women  
Come and go; the great machine perfected  
Slowly as the souls its gridiron blackens,  
Saves or sanctifies, makes strong or ruins.

Morning breaks. Commuters march to battle.  
So the forms are locked, and now the presses  
Thunder down and stamp to-day's insistence  
On a thousand streets. These tall sky scrapers  
Capitals and points of exclamation,  
Punctuate a nation's evolution.

So we print to-day, and pull our proof sheets,  
Crude yet vital. Scan this yellow journal  
Summarizing all. Here arson, murder  
Graft and rape, disaster, panic, treason;  
Blood and fire in headlines black and crimson,  
Shriek aloud; electrify the millions,  
Drugged with noise and weariness, the columns  
Of creation's conquest. So to-morrow  
Formulates: and One above omniscient  
Sets His type, makes up each new edition,  
Of this life that spells immortal purpose.

As we read He reads. And every letter,  
Every comma counts. These starving children.  
Women sold to shame, and strong men ruined,  
Serve His ends obscure; and slowly, surely,  
God's great circulation here enlarges;  
His significance and man's emerges:  
Out of chaos, law; from battle, triumph.

*New York, 6, 17, '10.*

## THE DRUMMER

**C**OME!

Step up lively gentlemen, get busy here and buy.  
Listen to my patter while I hypnotize your eye  
With my patterns up to date. This talking's mighty dry.

Rum;

Colors my complexion and my point of view maybe.  
I'm the advance agent of the world's prosperity  
Every rosy prospect would be minus, lacking me.

Dumb

Though you stand and calculate, my samples far I fling  
As a gambler stacks a pack and juggles ace and king,  
Till like hayseeds drawing cards, you order anything.

Numb

I shall beat your nerve of caution. Time is on his way.  
You can never have to-morrow what you miss to-day;  
And the slowest buyer never makes a business pay.

Some

Since I lead to-day's procession do their best to tell  
Smutty tales they label mine; and call me spawn of hell.  
Well, the women follow me, and all the world as well.

Glum

You'd be growling if they didn't make you ante up  
For the clothes they're bound to wear, as any yellow pup  
Kicked outside of life's shop window, lacking bite or  
sup.

Hum!

All the human hive is stirring, upper crust and scum.  
I'm the call to traffic's warfare. Hustleville I'm from.  
I'm the man that keeps things moving. Stock exchange  
and slum,

Doctor, lawyer, preacher, teacher, faker, banker, bum,  
Hike to Huge Production's quickstep when I pound my  
drum.

*And you've got to come.*

## INSURANCE

**H**URRY Central! Girlie, get me 2-0-0-4-K.  
Busy? Sis, sit on the buzzer. Please! That's  
better; say,

Get a move on, Mister. Cinch it. Don't step on your  
shoes!

Time means money; every minute. Life's too dear to  
lose.

Everything else I'll insure you; motors, glass and grain;  
Fire, marine, tornado, lightning's loss make good again.  
Everything but hours and seconds, days that duffers  
waste,

Millions of them. So we hustlers strive in breathless  
haste

To catch up and square things. Ever see a doctor run  
When he saw an artery spout a block away? My son,  
We're the doctors of men's folly, footlessness and loss.

Say, it keeps us on the jump. Oh, well, they come  
across,

Pay beforehand. That's all right. We're credit's last  
reserve,

We're the ounce of fighting blood that gives it wind and  
nerve;

Socialism up to date that works, succeeds, survives;  
Gives men guts to pull their freight, make good, and  
other lives

Indirectly help and hearten. That's the only way,

You can help your average man, make your investment  
pay.

Graft? We've got it; just infernal waste, the price of  
greed,

Carelessness that's criminal. It spurs some to succeed,  
Keeps things moving. Some day we'll eliminate that  
waste,

## INSURANCE

---

Pay for old age pensions what we squander in our haste;

Make compulsory insurance for your working man  
Universal. We can do it if the Germans can.

Nearly nineteen hundred years, it took for men to grow  
Fit the benefits of life insurance first to know.

Well, we're growing faster now. We'll learn to irrigate  
Every field of effort yet. And say, it's something great  
Just our vital averages, to see them soar, expand.

Doctors do their share of course, but we, we bear a hand.

*Paris, 6, 17, '11.*

## THE PREACHER

**W**HAT has this, Thy nation to be thankful for  
to-day?

Forests brought low, abandoned farms, and mountains  
washed away;

Beauty and strength of earth, your shadowlands of trees,  
Butchered to pulp to print machine made infamies,  
Torches of treason, smoldering brands of strife.

Insatiate forest fires and funeral pyres of life;

Floods in their stead and drouth and barrenness.

Where once we saw Thy Promised Land, a desert we  
possess.

Waters polluted, wasted, curbed, in chains,

Stolen Niagara's swelling lawless gains;

Soil that is starved and wasted; ever, always, waste;

Waste by our women, waste that men in haste

Make with machines that greed and famine multiply

More than our money, while the little children die;

Blighting the spirit's roots, its fountains clogging, seal-  
ing,

Stifling the nation's soul that sickens from our stealing;

Waste in our cities, waste of light and air;

Deserts of stone and steel ribbed watch towers of de-  
spair



## THE PREACHER

---

Crushing the weakest into gutter slime;  
Waste in the slum, the mine, the mill, of millions: waste  
of time  
That speculates, that perjures, steals, lusts, murders,  
bribes, betrays:  
The waste of life, of babes unborn, unwelcome; nights  
and days  
Empty and loveless, thankless, faithless, lifeless, soulless,  
vain.  
Thus have we tilled Thy field in haste, in fever, fret and  
pain;  
Till in our wilderness of waste, we hunger. Tares ap-  
pear  
Thistles and thorns that hurt the heart, till pain our eyes  
shall clear.  
Lord of the sowing and reaping; Thou that dost burn  
away  
The weeds and fallen leaves of life, we thank Thee here  
to-day.  
Slowly we reap Thy wisdom; share love's sacrament of  
living,  
The bread of life Thy mills must grind; to-morrow's  
true Thanksgiving.

*New York, 10, 29, '10.*

## THE TYPEWRITER

**T**HAT'S Decatur rushing to the elevator. Yes,  
We've crowned him with his Panama, our up to  
date Success.  
I'm to type his next best seller. At the lowest guess,  
Fifty or one hundred thousand; fiction's watered stock;  
Shallow brilliance syndicated. Things could hurt and  
shock  
Once when I was fresh from college. Then I'd sneer  
and mock.

## THE TYPEWRITER

---

So I learned the limitations of to-day's machine;  
Saw and felt and grasped its key board's typing hard  
and clean;  
Learned to read through imperfection lines of life be-  
tween.

There's the Dial. You scan your head lines. Terse,  
dynamic, fit,  
Stands to-day's strong Anglo Saxon. Child, be proud  
of it.  
Live your star reporter's stories. Lord, how hard they  
hit.

Not machine made. Made by men who harness steam  
with steel;  
Probe the pulse of life electric; vital truth reveal  
Through a ticker's fluctuations, or a grafter's deal.

Shakespeare, Milton, never guessed it. There's the  
other side  
Where we women slush and gush, and egos green con-  
fide,  
Faked emotions pad with plush. And clever men deride.

At our own game beat us, steal the money that we waste  
On outrageous hats, and skirts that trip us in our haste  
To a man modiste made heaven or hell; Manhattan's  
taste,

Slowly, very slowly forms. The chemistry of thought  
Feeds on Broadway's senseless swarms. A miracle is  
wrought.  
Out of slow solution storms a genius heaven taught.

Once I dreamed a woman, I, might set this world alight;  
Watched the arc-lights ape the sky; and martyred paper  
white,  
Fads in fiction now I trade on; priestly twaddle cite.

## THE TYPEWRITER

---

So I live, Decatur too. Outside this door there stands  
One who watches silently till life supreme commands,  
"Be my Voice, my Prophet, holding all hearts in thy  
hands."

*New York, 6, 10, '10.*

## THE EXPLORER

**B**ACK in the shadows a great gray gorilla beat the  
long roll of the dead on his chest,  
Till my bearers broke out of the gloom of the forest;  
through the fog of the fever I saw in the west  
Like a swimmer that dives through a cloudy green bil-  
low the opal of sunset that lay on a pool  
In a glade like a parkland in England; inviolate, passion-  
less, motionless, lovely and cool.

So it appeared as I lay in my hammock till we came to  
the place where a village once stood.  
Ashes and fragments of hides and of huts and of bones  
and of rotting and weatherstained wood.  
And I thought it was fever again till a man from one of  
our missions made plain the next day,  
On a steamer down river, the scope of the plan by which  
Leopold's Free State of Hell had to pay.

So many districts, and so many cannibal soldiers to  
stamp the king's terror on all;  
So many pounds of crude rubber each month, and never  
a rebate or respite at all;  
So much commission for all in excess, to the outcasts  
from Belgium colonized here;  
So many murders for forfeits forever; and so many  
phantoms of horror and fear.

For they butchered the babies, the old and the weak.  
And they lashed off the backs of the women with  
child;

## THE EXPLORER

---

Stretched them out naked to stiffen and shriek. And  
they slashed out their bowels when they rolled and  
went wild.

And they penned them in filth for a torment and threat,  
that the others might see while they waited their  
turn.

The old slave trade was heaven beside this while yet to  
spare human cattle their herders might learn.

It was lucky for me and for others maybe, that the fever  
still held when my ship sailed away.

I saw red when McCann told his story to me. And so  
your red rubber comes here still to-day.

This is the price that your joy riders pay, and the com-  
fort that keeps you from wet and from mud;

With its tribute of tears that their task masters weigh.  
And its fabric is stiffened with sweat and with  
blood.

And the world goes its way. You have Congos at home  
that concern you as little as Leopold's own.

You have cannibals, murders made by machines, by mil-  
lions. I walk the waste places alone.

I come back and find you as cruel and tame as Paris  
when Louis Napoleon fell.

But if Hugo were here should not letters of flame of  
America's shame and its tolerance tell?

*Guernsey, 7, 18, '11.*

## X CRITICS

### *SLUM CHILDREN*

**Y**OU who are merciful, mothers who far from us  
Bend o'er a cradle that sways to and fro;  
Hear us, draw near us, take not God's last star from us:  
Part of the love that your little ones know.

Mothers are ours who their heart's blood would give for  
us,  
All that they have. Others left us alone.  
Find them and help them to learn how to live for us,  
Lost in this desert of steel and of stone.

Voices of sorrow to-morrow must bear to us,  
Noises that surge like the waves of the sea,  
Echoes of toil that no second can spare to us.  
This is our lullaby, was, and shall be.

Low in the gutter where traffic may tread on us,  
High on the roofs in the heat of July;  
Night, one black flame that is endless, outspread on us;  
Children of darkness, we languish and die.

Hear us, draw near until weakness and fear in us  
Fade like the shadows; till love has made strong  
All that is truest, most tender and dear in us;  
We who lie stained by the shadow of wrong.

*Bideford, 8, 14, '11.*

## MOTHERLESS

NOT to the street child starved, your sister fallen  
low,

Pander and thug and slave of millions do you owe  
The greatest debt of all, you mothers who have failed.  
To us your flesh and blood that men have loved and  
hailed

To-day's Madonnas; doubted, let our radiance fade  
Slowly, and gone their ways; to us that you have made  
America's reproach, spoiled children of all time;  
To us you shall account. We never learned to climb  
Held by a mother's hands. We never learned to love  
At love's own breast and fount baptized. The world  
above

You have disdained, betrayed, lost in your daughters'  
eyes

Farmed out to hirelings blindly. Now within me cries  
The voice of life itself demanding to be born.

*I want my mother.* Breathless, senseless, bleeding, torn,  
Some two short months from now I must begin to see;  
Alone begin my warfare long, my spirit's pregnancy.  
I sought for human help. And I have found a book.

And there my soul's own mother lives, and lets me look  
Up to her eyes, and lips that lifeless seem to say  
"You shall be brave and bear your share, the only way  
We women learn to serve and triumph; justify  
God's gift of life. For you shall be too strong to die.  
You shall win through, and know the travail and the  
pain

Spurs on the long, long road that body, soul and brain  
Are slowly fitted for; the trail to victory;  
Till taught by you, your sons outrun you. You shall see  
Sons and your sisters' sons bear up a sinking state;  
Daughters divine once more America make great;  
Nearest of all the world that land beyond the dream  
Where the strong soul of motherhood shines forth su-  
preme."

*Kenosha, Wis., 7, 4, '10.*

## THE TELLER

THE long line wavers forward like a snake.  
I stand behind the bars, reach out to take  
The pass book from a boy scarce fit for school.  
With longing eyes the little grasping fool  
Yields up his roll of bills and leaves the place.  
The same keen lust has branded many a face  
Born to be glad. A girl in decent black  
Two hungry eyes lifts trembling, at her back  
A Jew, all paunch, with new anointed head  
Steeped in the lees of brothels seems to shed  
Prosperity, and leers well satisfied.

Next comes a sharp-nosed trader, eager eyed,  
Studying still his neighbor to outwit.  
And now a priest in coat of faultless fit  
Crowds past a cripple, and a painted whore  
Follows him forth across the marble floor  
Of this new temple of our liberties.

They yield their tribute to me. Filth, disease  
Lurk in these withered laurels of to-day.  
This is our shrine success has built. We pay.  
We have forgotten how to pray. And still  
To this confessional we come. No skill  
Can hide the sordid secrets of this face,  
Its ulcers heal, its infamies erase.

Four o'clock strikes, and forth our magnates go  
To club or country house. They never know  
The hearts we handle here, the souls laid bare,  
Distorted, vile. And like an endless prayer  
Life's substance slipping past our helpless hands,  
Daily its Teller notes and understands.

*New York, 1, 14, '10.*

## THE BAR KEEP

**W**ELL, you see it's this way.  
There's the brewer to pay,  
And a man's got to keep open every damn day.  
If I don't ante up, if my side door's shut tight  
All Sunday; McGuire over there who's in right  
With the boss of this ward, gets my trade till I'm broke.

Say, this Raines law hotel bill's one hell of a joke!  
I don't think; and the women; those ten rooms up-  
stairs—  
You know what they're for. Who in hell of you cares?

You don't see your own kids ever rushing the can,  
When the lady next door lets them lap from the pail  
Till they fall in the gutters. You think you're a man  
So did Dives I bet, and that fine Pharisee  
On the Jericho road. You're no better than me.

So you sit in your club all day Sunday and look  
At the women outside with your glass by your hand,  
With your dinner digested, your newspapers scanned,  
"Those poor devils," you say. Just put this in your  
book  
I'd sooner a darned sight be like them than you.

They suffer and starve. Some go down. Some win  
through.

They're in hell; but they live. And I keep them alive  
Every cold winter night when my free lunch runs low.  
Say my soul's sold for graft. Say I ladle out hell.  
I've my wife and my kids to look out for as well  
As that one with her pail. What in hell do you know  
What this neighborhood means, how we somehow con-  
trive

To make good your neglect, your distrust, your mistakes;  
Your cheap cowardice too. When God's judgment day  
rakes

His sheep from His goats, is it you that He takes?

*New York, 4, 30, '10.*



## THE RUNAWAY

**O**H, green square mile of Arcady To-Day,  
Where lovers that once were, still pray and play,  
Watching the lovers that are yet to be;  
The birth of smiles, of words caressing, kisses. See  
We are earth's children still. The city's stifled noise  
Leaves us once more immortal girls and boys  
Grasping our bubble joys, each perfect day  
Blown from the void. Be sure she comes to play.  
Wake, seek her out, and find her here when dawn  
Gleams iridescent, to your nearness drawn,  
Till Heaven's own day-break dawns in lovely eyes  
Here in our common people's Park and Paradise.

Meet her at noon and meet her here when night  
Holds earth in arms of shade. Each white arc light  
Beacons a vista new. Through avenues of happiness  
Though they be crowded we shall go no less  
Past benches where there's only room for two  
Two in eternity, like me, like you;  
Vulgar and weak perchance, defiled and frayed;  
Here in the moonlight more than mortal man and maid;  
Hearing the living echoes of some old transcendent tune,  
Breathing the fragrant beauty of a perfect night in June.

Pray they be happy, dearest, each and all.  
Pray they hold fast their treasure, though the years hold  
them in thrall;  
See but the distant beauty of the Plaza's cliff of light.  
There there are diamonds and despair. We see the  
stars to-night.  
Past us the motor dragons with their eyes of monsters go,  
Ogres and witches riding down to Venusberg. We know  
Our treasure's here. Policeman Death may drive us  
from the Park;  
We shall go home though hand in hand, and never in the  
dark.

*New York, 11, 17, '10.*

## THE CRITIC

I LEFT the Abbey, the gray Poets' Corner,  
As redolent of immortality  
As withered rose leaves in an Eastern jar,  
Or incense half consumed. I sought the Strand  
Where motor busses, with their flaming signs  
Shrieked out to-day's demands, and vanished. There  
The presses from the ends of earth caught up  
And wove their printed shoddy; and the patterns  
Of truth, essential, stern, immutable.

I dined alone in a huge hall of noise  
And lavishness. And there Americans,  
The men and women that I envy least,  
Made merry. I sought out a music hall—  
They held the center of the stage and murdered  
The language Milton loved and Lincoln saved.

Back in my huge hotel I watched the mob;  
Exotic, crude, insatiate, reeking wealth;  
To-day's Barbarian hordes. I asked myself  
"What of the gardens of the mind and heart?  
Shall Goths and Vandals spare them?" At my left  
Sat Attila, an emperor of oil,  
Or coal, or steel. I watched him plan his treasons;  
His piracies and murders. He was pleased;  
I saw Japan and Germany march nearer.

And England's voice grew faint. And then I heard  
A child's clear treble, and my pirate stooped  
And held her to him; and his tyrant's face  
Grew tender, beautiful. The mother smiled.  
Somehow I saw that better hands than mine  
Hold fast our destinies: and I slept soundly.

*London, 9, 20, '11.*

## THE PAWN-BROKER

**T**HIS is the chapel of despair. And here her pilgrims lay  
Gifts on my greasy altar and slowly creep away.  
Here in my black confessional I mark with my ear and eye  
Their secret shames, their agonies. Pledges of days gone by  
Out of their breasts like life-blood from their sick hearts they draw.  
They shall strip off their wedding rings when hunger's iron law  
Divorces them from happiness and love's last memory;  
And tears their sacrament of loss confirm eternally.

These are life's failures, yours not mine, predestined of the past  
And of to-day. I give them grace and strength. So some at last  
Through the stern creed of sacrifice to foothold sure shall win.  
I am the clerk that in my books records a city's sin,  
The hand that sifts your dross to-day, the court of last resort,  
For starving spirits cast away, through good and ill report.  
And shall not I do good by stealth; who day by day must dole  
Out of life's clinic drear the drug that saves or slays the soul?

Have you not made me what I am as you have fashioned them,  
I who strip off the midnight's sham from morning's sordid hem?  
I who the secrets of the heart, the dregs of life reveal,  
I who must see the slow tears start; have I no time to feel?

## THE PAWN-BROKER

---

And yet my heart looks up and sings when some bold  
gambler flings

Upon my counter bare the pledge of life's diviner things.  
I keep a starling in a cage, find heaven inside my cell,  
See sunlight on life's darkest page its golden letters spell.

*New York, 10, 19, '10.*

## THE EXCEPTION

**N**O, she wasn't my friend. And that's where I get  
off. You won't pry one word more out of me.  
I'm a woman myself. And I won't turn her down.

That's final. Of course I agree

That it puts you in bad. That's your funeral though.

You reporters must feel yourselves men

When they send you to nose out the secrets you steal,  
and you sneak back to sell them again.

But the women all read them? There's one standing  
here that you never can take for your text.

Though Eve ate that apple, just take it from me, an  
editor first put her next.

And old Satan and Co. are right here on the job. And  
the reason they do it is plain.

If you advertise scandal and murder and greed your  
paid advertisers you gain.

If you circulate lust you can circulate lies; you can take  
the edge off the mind

Of a people you teach to watch out for the worst, that  
you cheapen and coarsen and blind;

That you swindle by day, and you drug every night with  
plays made on Broadway as true

To the stern and immaculate motives of life as the scan-  
dals your sewer gangs pursue.

The good Lord made His skunks and His Satans as  
well. And you journalists maybe know why

## THE EXCEPTION

---

When your columns ooze filth, and your head lines drip  
blood, and your editor's soul is a lie;  
When your telephones, telegraphs, cables and presses  
one woman your target have made,  
Till you damn her in print in the eyes of the earth. Do  
you really feel proud of your trade?  
Do you really believe that the world really wants about  
rotteness always to read?  
Do you think that to slander the whole human race is  
your only sure way to succeed?

Now suppose you make just one exception a day, your  
front page with one column adorn;  
How Manhattan from hell men are moving away, tell us,  
make us all glad we are born,  
Quote teachers and nurses and settlement workers, show  
all how to cure not to kill,  
Like the chemists and surgeons of bodies and souls that  
pick up the pieces we spill;  
Wouldn't people you surfeit with plungers and thugs  
for God's understudies be strong?  
Instead of your magnates' and criminals' mugs you have  
thrust in our faces too long,

Picture one happy child. And you'll find that it pays to  
feature man's faithfulness too  
Beside swindles, to circulate joy more than shame, and  
virtue not vice interview,  
To make the world better not worse every day, more  
rich not in dollars but truth.  
For the father of lies is the blindest of fools. And we  
all knew it once in our youth.  
And if Satan's on top, if you can't throw him down, if  
he's pounding you too to the pit.  
You can side step him yet if you're young. And you  
are. If you don't like your job you can quit.

*New York, 1, 4, '12.*

## THE EXPATRIATE

**Y**OU'RE money-ridden, women-ruled. Machines the  
    swiftest ever known  
Make your lives cheap, however much or little you may  
    earn or own.  
They cut your days and nights to pattern, they standard-  
    ize your brains and souls.  
They speed you up. They make and break you. They  
    wear you out. A trust controls  
What you shall eat, and wear, and breathe; and see, and  
    hear, and feel, and think;  
When you shall marry; where you live. Their per-  
    juries in printer's ink  
They hand you daily, while you stand like cattle in their  
    subway trains.  
They steal your forests, fill your land with ulcer cities.  
    This remains  
To you, the ethics of the pack, the liberty of fang and  
    claw;  
While you pretend that none shall lack the freedom that  
    your lying law  
Ordains for all and sells to those who buy and sell your  
    votes as well.  
For you have watered manhood's stock and you have  
    syndicated hell.  
And since I worship truth and beauty, and seek their soul  
    in every land,  
You preach to me the patriot's duty. America you un-  
    derstand  
As little as the fly that turns upon the summit of the  
    wheel.  
But flies have wings, and you have lost the liberty to  
    see and feel,  
The liberty to move, to be outside your deadly tread-  
    mill round.  
To-day the world belongs to me, and love and laughter  
    I have found.  
I look for them. You look for money and iron-clad con-  
    tracts. You pursue

## THE EXPATRIATE

---

The shadow, and the substance lose. What good do all  
your millions do?

You use them hourly to oppress, to cheat, to slander,  
bribe, betray;

Through ignorance, or ruthlessness, or greed, whatever  
bars your way.

I hunt for happiness. I find it. I make its heart my  
Holy Grail.

I see it in the clouds at sunset, in children's smiles, in  
each frail veil

That human weakness wraps around Madonnas and the  
Forum's dust,

In women's tenderness and truth that you betray. Your  
money-lust

Clothes in barbaric rags and trinkets your savage daugh-  
ters and your wives;

Instead of chastity and honor. And yet America sur-  
vives

In spite of you her thankless children, and me her faith-  
less critic too.

And through your failures and unwisdom the Old World  
still looks up to you.

*Paris, 6, 15, '11.*

## THE LAST WORD

**W**E'VE been boys and men together fifty years.  
And now

You're going back to Washington, you're going to show  
them how

Once again to bluff and dicker; sell men's souls for lies;

Make the House a stock exchange; the Senate we despise

Just a bunch of boodling aldermen. And yet you know

Somehow, Bill, I love you still. I hate to let you go.

I'll be gone when you get back. This trip I'm going  
out.

## THE LAST WORD

---

I can feel it in my bones. The doctors have no doubt,  
Thousand dollar specialists from Boston that my wife  
Had to have. I'll die in style. It's all a part of life.  
Once we broke our backs together laying track in Maine.  
Then we got our grip on things. I see it pictured plain:

Like a moving picture lay out. Life's machine got you.  
Though you joined the gang and grafted, you got Annie  
too.

Now I'm going out to find her; maybe. No one knows.  
One thing though I've cinched for certain. There's a  
current flows

Farther than the farthest star, and deeper than the eye  
Through the strongest lens on earth shall ever certify.

Swim with it or fight against, all are swept along:  
All must serve it. All its eddies make men's leaders  
strong.

Here's America we're making. Well, I've done my  
share.

Take it by and large, I've played the game and played it  
fair.

One reform wave breaks. Another gathers down below.  
Once I doubted, didn't see how slowly God must grow.

Man, you're for Him; somehow, surely; while you gouge  
and steal;

Share the System's rake off; grab a gutter baby's meal.  
Some day you are going to see it, though you never see  
Here on earth or anywhere the mouthpiece that was me.  
Let me have your hand again.—I've got you, gripped  
you tight.

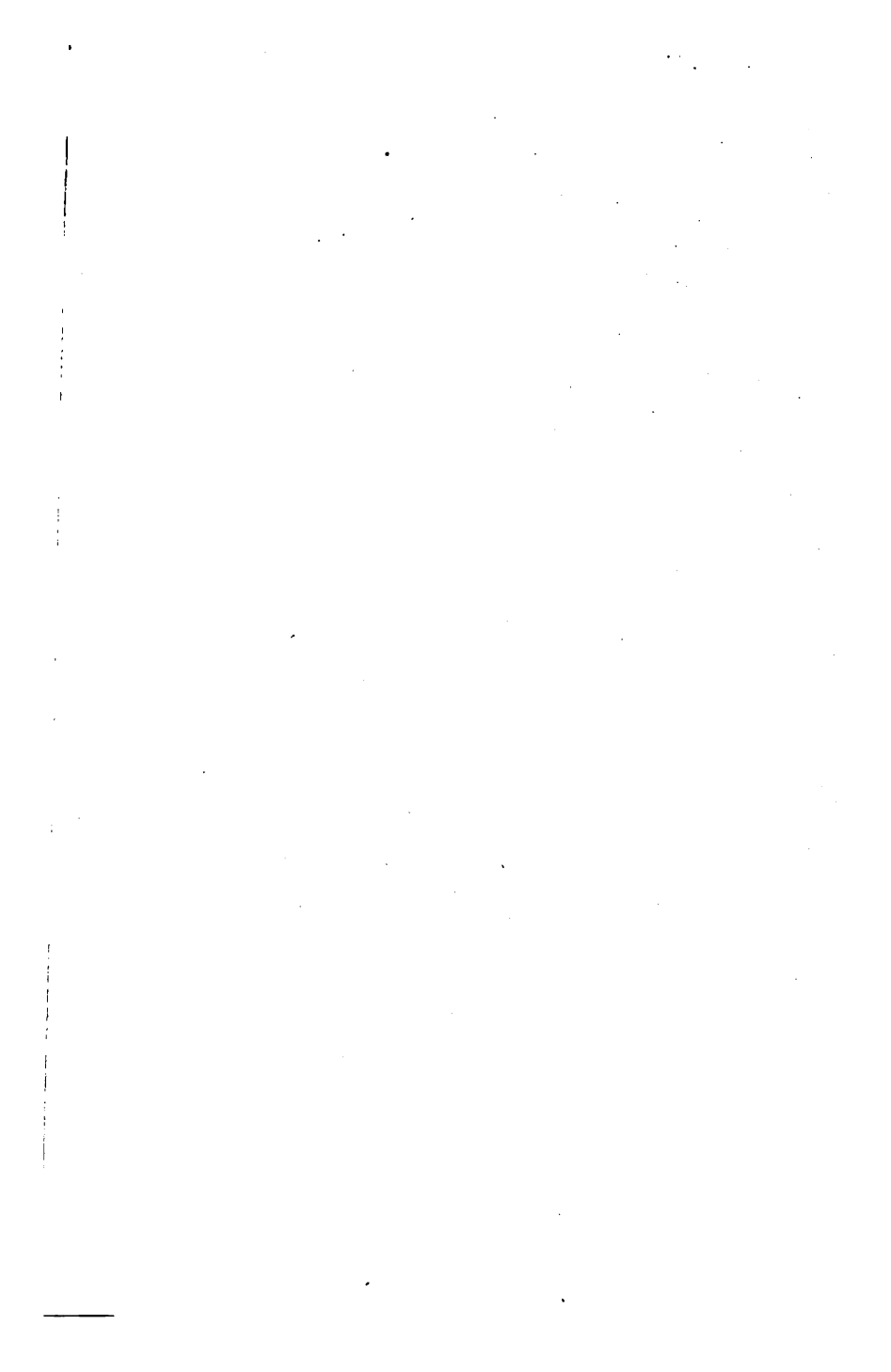
*Go and do your damndest, Bill. It's bound to work out  
right.*

*London, 9, 30, '11.*













# AMERICANS

100 Poems of Progress

By JOHN CURTIS UNDERWOOD

